

06 May 2010

Obama's Vision Highlighted at Entrepreneurial Luncheon

"Al-Mubadarah: The Arab Empowerment Initiative" launched



Al-Mubadarah CEO and President Hazami Barmada speaks at the luncheon.

By M. Scott Bortot
Staff Writer

Washington — Partnerships between the United States and Arab and Muslim communities, inspired by President Obama's vision in his June 2009 Cairo speech, dominated the agenda at the Entrepreneurship and Public Diplomacy Luncheon, held April 29 at a Washington hotel.

"One of the very tangible results of that speech was the entrepreneurial summit," Egyptian Ambassador to the United States Sameh Shoukry told the packed luncheon crowd about the Presidential Summit on Entrepreneurship held April 26–27 in Washington. "Everyone can recognize the impact and success of the summit in implementing the president's vision, a vision of engagement with the Arab and Muslim world."

Al-Mubadarah: The Arab Empowerment Initiative, in collaboration with the Aspen Institute, organized the luncheon, a partner event to the [presidential summit](#). Attending were representatives from Arab and American governments, as well as nongovernmental organizations and businesses, including entrepreneurs invited to the summit.

The lunch and subsequent networking event served to encourage an environment for dialogue and strengthening professional ties among participants. The focus was on opportunities to build mutual understanding between the United States and Arab and Muslim communities.

Pradeep Ramamurthy, the senior director for global engagement at the U.S. National Security Council, discussed the significance of [President Obama's Cairo speech](#) in forging a new direction in U.S. foreign policy.

"The relationship between the United States and the Arab world ... was defined for too long ... by a very narrow set of issues: diplomatic issues, security issues and especially over the last decade, counterterrorism," Ramamurthy told the gathering. "I think that [this] veils the enormous amount of potential, the enormous range of opportunities that we have as a group of countries together."

Farah Pandith, the U.S. State Department's special representative to Muslim communities, spoke to the luncheon about the role that listening plays in America's relationships. Pandith described the State Department's efforts to carry out Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton's goals for engagement with Muslims.

"We engage with the grass-roots, civil society, to hear what is taking place at that level and move ideas up to see where the American government can use its strength to be the conveyer, the facilitator and the intellectual partner with ideas that we hear on the ground," Pandith said. "We bring partners to the table that we don't usually see and find ways to execute networks that have never been built before ... to make a difference to a long-term commitment of partnership."

Hussein Hassouna, the Arab League's ambassador to the United States, welcomed the Obama administration's vision of engagement with Arab communities. Hassouna said Arab organizations are ready to answer Obama's call to improve relations.

"We can work together with the United States on different levels, official levels, governments, international organizations and regional organizations like the Arab League, the Organization for the Islamic Conference," Hassouna told the luncheon. "It is a collective effort and we can only succeed if we work together."

Walter Isaacson, president and chief executive of the Aspen Institute, stressed the importance of partnership during his speech and how he, as an American, benefitted from attending the entrepreneurship summit.

Born in New Orleans, Isaacson talked about how meeting entrepreneurs at the summit can help his city rebuild after it was devastated by Hurricane Katrina five years ago.

"When I was at the entrepreneurship summit this week I learned a whole lot of things that I want to bring back to my home state of Louisiana, where we are still recovering from the hurricane, about microlending, about banks, about different ways to do entrepreneurship that we can learn, that is already being brought to us by the entrepreneurs that came to this summit from around the world," Isaacson said.

The luncheon also marked the launch of Al-Mubadarah: The Arab Empowerment Initiative. Al-Mubadarah is an independent, multicultural and religious initiative devoted to developing an independent global platform for Arab engagement. Hazami Barmada, the organization's chief executive and president, said the meeting served as a forum for entrepreneurship summit delegates to see American groups interested in dialogue.

"What the State Department wanted [with the luncheon] was an opportunity for the summit delegates to see beyond merely what the U.S. government was doing," Barmada told *America.gov*. "It was a big part of the summit to connect the delegates also with American civil society and business."

12 May 2010

Summit Delegate Larry Summers Discusses Entrepreneurship

CO.NX webcast transcript, April 27

During A New Beginning: The Presidential Summit on Entrepreneurship, held April 26–27 in Washington, CO.NX provided live streaming of remarks made April 27 by summit delegate and former U.S. Treasury Secretary Lawrence H. Summers.

Following is the transcript:

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE
Bureau of International Information Programs
CO.NX Caption Transcript

“Larry Summers at A New Beginning: the Presidential Summit on Entrepreneurship”

Guest: Larry Summers
Date: April 27, 2010
Time: 9:30 a.m. EDT (13:30 GMT)

E Summit Moderator: It’s my great pleasure to introduce Larry Summers, who is going to be a household name. He was the president of Harvard before that, and also the secretary of the UDS, the president of the Treasuries and the chief economist of the World Bank before that. He’s also in the National Academy of Sciences and the first social scientist to receive the science foundation award. We are extremely honored to have him here, and we’re very lucky. Let me introduce Larry Summers.

Larry Summers: Thank you very much for that introduction. It’s interesting to tell that story to different countries and to see where they laugh and where they don’t; it tells you something about the culture of entrepreneurship, our topic today. What I thought I would do for just a few minutes is put all of this in a broader economic perspective by asking what in our time is going to be historically memorable three centuries from now. Perhaps the top story will be the end of the Cold War. But if you think about major conflicts between pairs of countries that took place 300 years ago, they are a little hazy in our memory. Perhaps the large story will be the relationship between the West, broadly defined, and the Islamic world and how that story plays out, and that’s certainly an issue of profound importance, but I would suggest that the greatest likelihood is the rise of emerging markets in Asia and beyond at unprecedented rates.

Larry Summers: They had changed very little. And our optimistic view, they had risen 75 percent. Over that 2300–2200 year period. If you look at the industrial revolution, the reason they called it the industrial revolution was that for the first time in human history, living standards rose at a rate where they were noticeably different at the end of a human life span than

they had been at the beginning. Growth of one to one and a half percent a year. If you look at the most rapid period of growth in U.S. economic history, per capita income and living standards rose two, two and a half percent, and a rate by which they rose five times within a single human life span. If we look at what is happening today in large parts of the world, we're seeing growth at 7, 8, 9, 10 percent a year. Where they raise not by a factor of one, two or five, but a factor of a hundred over a single human life span. Not in a single corner of Europe, but in a region where the largest share of the world's population lives, and we're seeing it in a world that is vastly more interconnected and able to feel its effects than the world that experienced the rise of the United States or experienced the industrial revolution. It will, over time ... reshape almost everything from the way in which people work to the nature of the art they regard as beautiful to the level of prosperity that they enjoy to the security fears that they choose to worry about.

It's going to be the historical story of our time. But I would suggest to you that it is a story that will be written in no small part by entrepreneurs because while economic history changes, while events change, if there is a constant in economic history, it may be the power of markets, and the power of entrepreneurs within them. It's not confined to technologies, it's new goods, new markets of production. New markets, new sources of supplies for raw materials and new ways of organization. As Stanford's Paul Romer, a leader of economic growth, said, this is perhaps the single most important thing to understand of economic growth over the long run.

Economic growth springs from better recipes, not just from more cooking. The static strategies of accumulation, whether pursued by Russia in the '40s and '50s, or whether pursued by Japan in 1980, worked for a time, but eventually ran out of gas. But the path, the purpose and continuing change is the path of better recipes, the path of innovation, and the path of the breakthroughs, organizational, intellectual or technological, that can transform societies. The work of entrepreneurs. In 19th century, the technologies that reverberate across the U.S. economy include the transcontinental railroad and the telephone. And in the 20th century, the jet plane, and everything associated with the computer and information technology, all of that was driven by entrepreneurs. Indeed, a culture of economic entrepreneurship has been central to the economic success of the United States. We are perhaps the only place in the world where you can raise your first hundred million dollars before you buy your first suit if you have a sufficiently good idea.

So, too, entrepreneurship will play an important role in the renaissance of China, India and the rest of the developing world. What transforms villages is whether they have an entrepreneur or whether they don't. In the wake of such creative efforts, entrepreneurs create jobs and stir economic activity. I would suggest that entrepreneurship drives economic growth in three critical ways. First, it fosters competition in a world economy whose shape is rapidly changing. It used to be that country's success could be judged by the size of the skyscrapers and steel plants, and yet at the turn of the 21st century, Microsoft had a greater capitalization and greater market value than the entire American steel, auto and aerospace sector combined. That was before people had ever heard of a startup company called Google. And we think of Wal-Mart, it's an enormous retailer, but compare that with eBay and his marketplace of 85 million active buyers and sellers. The economist whose name -- whose name is practically synonymous with the creative destruction of innovation, observed there is no such thing as dynamic equilibrium. Competition

breeds competition, and entrepreneurship breeds more entrepreneurship, and change can come quickly.

In understanding why the business landscape is profoundly different than it once was, consider this: in 1960 it took 20 years for a third of the Fortune 500 companies to turn over. Today it takes just four. It takes just four years for similar turnover. Entrepreneurship facilitates the incorporation of the new technology that is fueling economic growth. I was reminded many years ago now, in the mid-1990s, when as deputy treasury secretary I visited Côte d'Ivoire, and journeyed several hours away from the capital to a small town in Côte d'Ivoire where I had the privilege to turn on a water valve in a U.S. project that would provide for clean water for that village. The village was across a small lagoon and eight or 10 of us were on a boat that a few people were paddling to get across that lagoon. We had gotten there and done our thing and we were on the way back. As we were on that boat somebody stuck a cell phone in my face and said Secretary Rubin needs to talk to you. All I could think about was how different that was than any world that I live in. Here we were three hours away from the capital city of a desperately poor country in or near a village that was getting clean water for a first time, and I was able to be talking to Washington with a perfect connection, and nobody was thinking very much of it. That was about information technology.

As you suspect, that was about the private sector, and yes, that was entrepreneurship. 4.6 billion people today have access to mobile phones. Nearly two-thirds of the people on the planet. To take just one example, in 1995, Vietnam had one phone for every hundred people. Today it has 33, and two-thirds of them were mobile phones. It's estimated that a 10 percent increase in wireless penetration in emerging economies can result in a half-percent increase in the GDP. These examples are pervasive. You will hear them throughout your conference, and I am not going to try to describe them in detail. But if you ask what will make a difference over the long run, it is disruptive technology of the kind that entrepreneurship brings.

A final thought: Entrepreneurship provides opportunities and it supports freedom. If you look at some of the greatest entrepreneurs in our country, people like Bill Gates and Steve Jobs, they dropped out of college.

One study -- but the opportunity to break out, to break the mold has changed their lives, and it has changed the lives of others. Bernard Shaw once observed the reasonable man adapts himself to the world. The unreasonable one persists in trying to adapt the world to himself. Therefore, Shaw concludes, all progress depends on the unreasonable man. And so it is with entrepreneurs. Social scientists have debated for two centuries, and no doubt will debate for several more, the complex interrelationships between free markets and free societies. How to resolve those issues here today, but I would suggest to you this: free societies are the best breeding grounds for entrepreneurs.

An important test of the freedom in a society is whether it enables Shaw's unreasonable man to try to change the world. Are its consumers open to using new products in new ways? Is its financial system willing to take a chance on someone with a compelling vision but a short track record? Do its institutions enable people to be their future, to bet their future on a dream? If we in the United States have been successful over the last century, our ability to do these things

relatively well is no small part of the reason. And if it is true that free societies create entrepreneurs, it is also true that a strong entrepreneurial class makes a society freer. They provide choices for consumers. They provide options for those seeking jobs. They provide perspectives in the public sphere that cannot come from the public sector. They provide for independence from large hierarchal organizations. For competition they provide a check to power of large businesses and large governments that would otherwise be unchecked.

President Obama observed last night that throughout history, the market has been the most powerful force the world has ever known for creating opportunity and lifting people out of poverty. When history is written 300 years from now, the story of our times is likely to be one of unprecedented economic transformation, but it will be a story whose running theme of what entrepreneurs do, is what many of you live, and what we all know very well. Thank you very much. [Applause]

E Summit Moderator: Let's take a short break, and then we'll switch to a separate room based on which one you'd like to attend. The room to promote entrepreneurship will be in here and the amphitheater where we were yesterday afternoon.

26 April 2010

Commerce Secretary Locke's Address at Entrepreneurship Summit

U.S. efforts to build economic cooperation between U.S., Muslim communities

U.S. Department of Commerce
Remarks by Commerce Secretary Gary Locke
Presidential Summit on Entrepreneurship
Washington, D.C.
Monday, April 26, 2010

Good morning. I can't begin to tell you how honored I am to be before such a distinguished group of entrepreneurs.

On behalf of President Obama, I want to welcome you to the Presidential Summit on Entrepreneurship.

Last year, when President Obama detailed in Cairo his vision for this summit, he did so knowing that ties between America, Muslim-majority countries and Muslim communities around the world should be based on more than concerns about security or diplomatic issues – even though they are critical.

This summit underscores the President's commitment to pursuing a more comprehensive engagement based on mutual respect, mutual interest, and mutual responsibility.

With us today is an incredibly diverse range of participants. You hail from over 50 countries on five continents; individuals of many religious backgrounds; and you represent the full spectrum of the entrepreneurship ecosystem.

Some of you are entrepreneurs, some investors. Some run companies, foundations and non-profits, while others founded them. But together you epitomize and recognize the immense and vital role that a vibrant private sector has in promoting economic opportunity, and in improving the standards and quality of life for all within each of our communities and nations.

This entrepreneurial force extends across our respective shores. It unites America and Muslim-majority countries in a shared vision of promise.

Much like this event today, trade and commerce have always brought together diverse peoples in a common pursuit.

For thousands of years, entrepreneurs have found ways to transcend national, political, economic, physical and spiritual boundaries to create opportunity and prosperity for all.

As we look at the history of Islamic civilization, we see a rich tradition of invention and innovation.

The world was given coffee from Yemen; the first fountain pen from Egypt; and the first windmill from Persia.

It was a Muslim engineer who invented the crankshaft, which is the foundation of much of the machinery in today's modern world.

For centuries, goods and services flowed east and west through the trading hubs that extended throughout your countries and regions.

Today, perhaps more than ever, international trade holds tremendous potential for improving people's lives. And innovation and entrepreneurship in particular have the potential to be the great equalizer.

Any man or woman with a great idea and the will to pursue it can change not only their own lives, but peoples' lives all over the world. Just look around this room and you see almost 300 living examples of exactly that.

As our world stares down an immense set of challenges, from climate change and poverty to disease and resource scarcity, we need the brightest minds from every corner of the globe looking for solutions.

And today, we are honored to have some of those bright minds gathered right here in this room.

You hail from different countries and work in different industries and are addressing different social challenges, but you are united by your relentless will to succeed, even in the face of immense obstacles.

There's a young woman here who built a thriving tailoring business in Taliban controlled Afghanistan; a young man who launched a nonprofit to promote entrepreneurship in the Palestinian territories, and a doctor from Nigeria working to advance health among that country's young people.

Also with us is the founder of a private equity firm that makes investments in natural resources and infrastructure in Indonesia and Southeast Asia, and several founders of major corporations, from courier services and airlines to telecommunications.

You are different in so many ways. And yet you all share a unique and uncommon talent to bring hope and opportunity to your communities.

The challenge before us is to take the tremendous success all of you have had individually and expand it throughout the Islamic world.

There are over one billion people living in Muslim-majority countries today.

They represent a vast reserve of under-utilized potential in the global economy – both in terms of their demand for goods and services, as well as their ability to create technological and social innovations that will drive economic growth and social development within their own countries and throughout the world.

All of you are here today because of your past, present and future efforts to unleash this potential.

It is very much in America's and the entire world's interests that you succeed.

In the United States, we are just now emerging from the worst economic crisis many of us have ever seen.

Too many Americans who want work still can't find it; and too many people who are working can't get enough of it.

To replace the jobs we have already lost and to create new, better paying jobs, the Obama Administration is taking bold steps to grow our economy.

Central to these efforts is a renewed focus on international trade. The stronger the economies of the world and the more middle class in all of our nations, the more international markets there will be for each of our nations.

Strong and balanced international trade only works if countries have growing economies and growing middle classes that are fully engaged in the international marketplace. There needs to be people – entrepreneurs – all around the world who can take new ideas and innovations from elsewhere around the world – as well as create their own – and spur growth in their own countries.

And building that capacity in Muslim-majority countries and Muslim communities is why we have all gathered here this week.

So why the focus on entrepreneurs?

Because they are the heart of all thriving economies.

When innovators and entrepreneurs can easily turn their ideas into businesses, jobs and economic opportunity follow closely behind.

Entrepreneurs are a powerful force for change. They improve the business climate in their own countries and champion necessary policy reforms. And they improve practices in global markets.

Commerce, grounded in mobile telecommunications, for example, is rapidly transforming markets worldwide thanks to the work of entrepreneurs from Muslim majority countries such as Bangladesh.

In the United States, we have always relied upon entrepreneurs to be a primary engine of our economic growth.

Firms less than 5 years old – many of which are considered small businesses – have accounted for nearly ALL net new jobs in America's private sector over the last three decades.

My own biography is a testament to America's entrepreneurial history.

My grandfather immigrated to America from China, initially working as a servant for a family in the capital city of Washington State, in exchange for English lessons. My father, also born in China, opened a small business in Washington State, a grocery store. I worked at that store as a student, and it was the profits from that store and the fruits of my father's hard work that enabled me to become Governor of the state of Washington, 100 years after my grandfather landed in America, one mile from where my grandfather was a servant boy.

But immigration should not be the only pathway for those seeking opportunity.

As much as America has benefited from the contributions of immigrants, we also respect the strong desire that citizens around the world have to see their own countries grow, develop and thrive.

Entrepreneurs can change not just economies but societies. Social networking sites haven't just spawned new companies...they have changed how people around the world interact with one another. Even before there was the Internet, there were people who mobilized communities to advance just causes – from education and healthcare to civil rights.

And I am happy to hear that one of the regional conferences that will follow this Summit – in Iraq - will focus on social entrepreneurship.

I want to be clear that the United States engages in these efforts to expand entrepreneurship in a spirit of partnership, not of patronage.

The U.S. and American workers have much to gain from this summit, as well as other efforts to build economic cooperation between our nations.

From brilliant scientific advances in water management and desalinization technologies, to the truly incredible success Middle Eastern telecom companies have enjoyed distributing mobile phones throughout the developing world, to the staggering growth of services and tourism in the Gulf – there is no question that Muslim communities have the capacity to nurture a thriving entrepreneurial culture.

The challenge at this summit is to fully realize that potential by growing new businesses, industries and economic opportunity.

Over the next couple days, we'll be holding plenary sessions to address a wide array of issues that help build entrepreneurial cultures. Among other things, we will be talking about social

entrepreneurship, technology and innovation, access to capital, women and youth entrepreneurship and mentoring and networking.

We've got a full slate of events, and I'm confident that we'll conclude this summit with concrete commitments to act. But I want everyone here to know that President Obama and his administration do not see this summit as a one-time event, but rather part of the process of creating a sustainable focus on entrepreneurship.

U.S. Embassies around the world are holding roundtables with entrepreneurs and other key stakeholders. USAID has already held several listening sessions on entrepreneurship, including in Cairo, and a virtual effort that included thousands of participants from over 150 countries.

And several foreign governments and NGOs have offered to host follow-on regional conferences...from Algeria to Kyrgyzstan, Bahrain to Indonesia. And I'm proud to say that the Commerce Department is deeply engaged in this challenge.

This year, the Commerce Department will be leading at least five trade missions to Muslim majority countries. And we will be hosting as many as 27 reverse trade missions from Muslim majority countries. This December, I'll be hosting a conference in Washington, D.C. to highlight opportunities for commercial engagement for American companies in the Middle East and North Africa.

And, together with the State Department, the Commerce Department's Commercial Law Development Program is advancing policy and legal frameworks in Muslim majority countries with the goal of advancing entrepreneurship.

This is a government-wide effort for the U.S. And you will hear from many of my colleagues about the many ways we are working to advance mutually beneficial ties between our peoples.

This summit is a beginning, not an end.

And even as President Obama and his administration continue our vigorous efforts to promote entrepreneurship, we know there are limits to what we can do.

Governments have an important role to play in convening, mobilizing and facilitating. We can develop policies and incentives to spur entrepreneurship.

But ultimately, it is leaders like you who will build the businesses and the networks, and create the innovations that your economies and communities need in order to grow.

You have so much to offer. And when you leave the summit tomorrow, I hope you will return to your communities with a renewed sense of purpose that you will mentor the next generation of entrepreneurs and will advocate for changes in your societies that will allow your neighbors to realize their full potential.

Because promoting entrepreneurship is, in fact, very much about promoting our common humanity.

Every time a person's potential is deferred or squandered, whether here or abroad, it is a tragedy.

In this world, people are largely defined by their calling, by their profession. This is fundamental to the human condition – seeking a purpose, seeking meaning through work or service. When people cannot find work, when they cannot apply themselves to better their own lives or the lives of their families and community, they ache for meaning.

That ache is powerful... It is compelling. And in some way, your presence here is a response to that ache, to the knowledge that ambition can transform lives and transform societies, but only if it is met with opportunity.

I hope this summit can help soothe that ache in all our societies, and that our countries can find common ground in providing our people purpose and opportunities for a better life. Thank you.

26 April 2010

Presidential Summit on Entrepreneurship: Follow-On Conferences

Institutions, partners express interest in advancing summit's mission

U.S. Department of State
Bureau of Public Affairs
April 26, 2010

Fact Sheet

Follow-On Conferences

Several overseas institutions and partners have expressed an interest in hosting Follow-on Conferences to continue to advance the mission of the Entrepreneurship Summit beyond the April 26 and 27 PSE in Washington. These Follow-on Conferences will be locally or regionally focused and may focus on a specific element of advancing entrepreneurship (e.g. youth entrepreneurship, access to capital, etc.) We have told these partners that we want to be supportive of these events and acknowledge them at the Summit. We have said that we would attempt to have an appropriate USG official attend, but that we would not play any role in organizing them and would not expect to provide any funding assistance.

These Conferences have been initiated by partners who are heeding the President's call to shared action and responsibility. Through their initiative, they will help to advance what the United States and its partners on the Presidential Summit on Entrepreneurship have started. We have received Statements of Intent for the following Follow-on Conferences:

- **Indonesia:** The government of Indonesia has committed to a Follow-on Conference.
- **UAE/Abu Dhabi:** The Aspen Institute and the government of the UAE will host a Conference in Abu Dhabi in June 2010 on Innovation.
- **Iraq:** The American University of Iraq-Sulaimani will host a conference on Social Entrepreneurship in Sulaimani, Iraq in Spring 2011.
- **Algeria:** The U.S.-Algerian Business Council will host a Conference in Algeria on entrepreneurship in the Maghreb in September 2010.
- **Bahrain:** The government of Bahrain will host a Conference on innovation, investment and entrepreneurship in December 2010.
- **France:** The French-American Foundation has committed to host a Conference on youth entrepreneurship in disadvantaged communities late in 2010 or early in 2011.

- Kyrgyzstan: The American University of Central Asia, with some Department of State support, will host a Conference on Women Entrepreneurship in Bishkek in May 2010.

- UAE/Dubai: The Legatum Institute at MIT and the Dubai School of Government are hosting a Conference in Dubai on “Best Practices in Entrepreneurship Policy” in November 2010.

27 April 2010

Secretary Clinton's Remarks at Summit on Entrepreneurship

Says gathering sought to sustain, strengthen and expand entrepreneurship

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE
Office of the Spokesman
April 27, 2010

REMARKS

Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton
Closing Remarks at the Presidential Summit on Entrepreneurship

April 27, 2010
Ronald Reagan Building
Washington, D.C.

SECRETARY CLINTON: Thank you. Thank you very much. Thank you. I want to thank Jim Wolfensohn for participating in this conference. This is hot off the presses. The Social Entrepreneurship in the Middle East: Towards Sustainable Development for the Next Generation, produced by the Wolfensohn – as in Jim Wolfensohn – Center for Development at the Brookings Institute – apparently, this is an issue whose time has come. And that's because of all of you.

So it is such a pleasure to be with you at one of the most exciting gatherings of entrepreneurs anywhere in the world today. And I join those who have already welcomed you to Washington and thank you for helping to make President Obama's Summit on Entrepreneurship such a success. With this summit, we carry forward a conversation about the role that entrepreneurs can and must play in a healthy, thriving, prosperous, stable society, and how each of us, no matter where we live or who we are, can help to spread the principles and the benefits of entrepreneurship to people everywhere.

I would imagine that some of you came wondering, well, what is this really all about and why is the United States and the Obama Administration sponsoring this conversation? And it is because we believe that by bringing together men and women from dozens of countries and all walks of life, this summit has made one thing clear: Being entrepreneurial does not depend on your job title or what you studied in school or even that you went to formal schooling at all. Entrepreneurship is a way of looking at the world and seeing not just obstacles, but

opportunities; not just the world as it is, but the world as it could be, and then having the confidence, the determination, and the resources to move those worlds closer together.

An entrepreneur is anyone with the imagination to conceive of a new product, process, or service, and the ability and persistence to turn that idea into something real. My father was a small businessperson. By that, I mean very small. He employed maybe one, two, or three laborers depending upon what he was doing. He ran a small printing plant for fabrics. He enlisted my mother, my brothers and me. We were often down there at the factory doing the work of pouring the paint into the silk screens and taking what was called a (inaudible) and pushing the paint through the design and then lifting the screen up and moving it down these very long tables. And it was really remarkable that my father made a success of that small business just by dint of hard work, persistence, commitment, and a belief that he could.

Well, here with us today are people who would recognize that story. Masooma Habibi, who was born in an Afghan refugee camp, worked as a carpet weaver as a young girl, and now, at the age of 23, runs her own electrical engineering company in Kabul and has more than 20 employees. Ibrahim Qureshi, who – yes, let's give her a round of applause. (Applause.)

Ibrahim Qureshi, who founded Pakistan's first domestic computer brand; and Rehema Jaldesa, who runs a construction and telecommunications company in Kenya, literally helping to build her country's future; Daler Jumaev, who directs the only private power company in Tajikistan. It used to provide just 12 hours of electricity a day, but thanks to his leadership, homes there now have power nearly around the clock.

As these and so many other stories represented by all of you show, entrepreneurs create jobs, deliver services, help new industries get off the ground, raise the standard of living of direct employees, and then all who are touched by them. But the realm of the entrepreneur exists beyond business. Entrepreneurs are tackling problems of poverty and inequity, like Shaheen Mistri, whose nonprofit provides after-school tutoring to children in slums in India. They're closing gaps in healthcare delivery and access to capital, like Amjid Ali, a banker who leads health and finance outreach programs for South Asian immigrants in England. They're expanding access to communication technologies, helping people connect to each other and the larger world, like Papa Yusupha Njie, who trains young people in Web design and computer repair at his cyber cafe in The Gambia.

Now, these accomplishments should be possible anywhere and everywhere. Human imagination is, after all, universal. Yet too often, people cannot follow where their imagination leads them because innovation is simply too difficult or too risky. As a result, good ideas have nowhere to go.

So in light of these challenges, President Obama proposed this summit not only to celebrate your work, but to find ways to sustain, strengthen, and expand it. We knew that more dreams could come true if you could be put in touch with each other, and I've been delighted to hear about your discussions during the summit – the challenges you've addressed, the stories you've shared, the opportunities you've begun to explore together. And I hope these conversations will

continue throughout the week at the events that our partners have planned for you in Washington.

Because engaging through entrepreneurship can benefit every country represented here, including, I might add, the United States, by forging closer ties through increased trade, new educational exchanges, new partnerships in science and technology, greater cooperation on global challenges like hunger, poverty, or climate change. Relations between nations are sustained by the connections between their peoples. And so we are all stronger for your time together here.

And I hope each of you will return home full of new ideas and a renewed sense of both purpose and possibility. But as you know, an entrepreneur's life is not always easy, especially in the early days of a new enterprise when success is far from certain and partners may be hard to find. But every one of you is now part of this global community, with access to a network of information, advice, and support. And I hope you will help expand this community and turn the conversations you've had here into collaborations that endure.

And as you do that, I hope you'll remember that the fullest measure of your impact will not only be in dollars or dinars or rupees or rupiahs, but in the lives you change and the progress you inspire and the better futures you help to create. Because you have the power not only to drive economic growth, but to promote shared prosperity, call for open and accountable governance, help expand access to services like healthcare and education. These are the pillars of stable, thriving societies. And you are the people with the talent and opportunity to help build them.

And you can count on the United States to be your partner, because this summit reflects the new approach to foreign policy that President Obama described last year at Cairo University, one that we have been putting into practice through partnerships based on shared values, mutual respect, and mutual responsibility. These partnerships are not only with governments, but they are with citizens like all of you who can help us generate local, regional, and global progress. So far, we have developed initiatives that will build on the work of this summit and support entrepreneurs worldwide in the months and years ahead.

And here are some of the outcomes of this summit, as to what the United States intends to do. First, we are launching the Global Entrepreneurship Program. That's an initiative that will provide concrete support to new entrepreneurs, starting in Muslim-majority communities and eventually expanding to others worldwide. Through this program, we will work with the United States private sector partners and local businesses, along with civil society groups, to help create successful entrepreneurial environments. We will help sponsor business plan competitions to identify and support promising ideas. We will work to expand access to capital so entrepreneurs with a sound business concept will have access to credit to enable them to put their ideas to work. We will facilitate partnerships between business schools in the United States and educational institutions worldwide to share knowledge and help strengthen business education. We will support mentoring programs so someone starting out can benefit from the experience of someone who's been down that road before.

I'm pleased to announce the launch of the Global Entrepreneurship Program's first pilot program, in Egypt, coordinated by a team of Entrepreneurs in Residence from USAID. We will soon launch our second program in Indonesia, and we plan to expand to a dozen countries within the next two years. (Applause.)

Second, we have established partnerships with two Silicon Valley-based organizations: the Global Technology and Innovation Partners, and the Innovators Fund. Both were started by U.S. venture capitalists and business leaders inspired by President Obama's call at Cairo to support innovation and entrepreneurship in Muslim majority communities worldwide. Both partnerships will launch in Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Turkey, and Malaysia, and will then expand from there. (Applause.)

These new efforts will help increase access to seed funding, venture capital, and Silicon Valley's technology and business expertise. The State Department will help facilitate this effort by connecting these funds with local partners and institutions. Now, our partnerships are inclusive. We seek to work with a wide range of private sector groups that are looking to support entrepreneurs worldwide.

We will also be working to implement an exciting partnership that I launched this morning. Together with former Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, I announced a collaboration between the State Department and a new group called Partners for a New Beginning. This is a team of eminent Americans from across sectors and industries who will lead an effort to engage the U.S. private sector in carrying out our vision for a new beginning with Muslims in communities globally.

For example, they might reach out to companies to provide equipment and technology for the Scientific Centers of Excellence overseas, or help launch internships and mentoring programs for emerging business leaders, or encourage angel investors in this country to partner with angel investors abroad. Through collaborations like these, Partners for a New Beginning will deepen ties between our people and institutions, and give more Americans the chance to contribute to this common endeavor.

Partners for a New Beginning will be chaired by Secretary Albright. Its vice chairs will be Walter Isaacson, the president of the Aspen Institute, and Muhtar Kent, the chairman and CEO of Coca-Cola Company. And I want to thank them for their commitment and I really hope that this effort will inspire similar efforts from private sector leaders around the world.

Fourth, I'm pleased to announce the launch of a new effort to expand access to mentors for aspiring and emerging entrepreneurs. We're calling it the e-Mentor Corps. Mentors provide invaluable support and advice, but for too many entrepreneurs, good mentors are hard to find. You may be doing something that nobody else you know has ever attempted before. Through the e-Mentor Corps, an entrepreneur seeking a mentor can go online and find a person with the expertise they need on everything from securing financing to writing a business plan.

Several private sector groups have pledged to supply mentors from their global networks, including Intel, Ernst & Young, the Kauffman Foundation, Endeavor, TechWadi, the Young

Presidents' Organization, and Babson College. The State Department has worked with several existing groups to create and develop online portals for the e-Mentor Corps. And in the days ahead, we will post links to those sites on the State Department homepage. We will also email you and other partners with the details of how to sign up. And we hope that in the future, each of you can become a mentor as well. The success of this program depends on its participants, and I urge you to join and to encourage others to do the same.

Now, these initiatives comprise a first wave of programs to promote global entrepreneurship. But they reflect the Obama Administration's commitment to a new approach to development, one based on investment, not aid; on supporting local leadership and ideas rather than imposing our own. We believe that this approach is more likely to yield lasting results in the form of greater security, dignity, prosperity, and opportunity for more people worldwide. And we call on other governments to help facilitate this progress.

Now, in particular, we know that there are many obstacles to your doing business in many of the countries represented here. We need to encourage your governments to make the legal and commercial reforms needed to encourage trade, allow for the free flow of ideas, lower the barriers to launching new businesses. (Applause.)

These reforms are critical to creating an environment in which entrepreneurs can flourish. I have emphasized all of these issues in my conversations with leaders around the world and will continue to do so. And for those countries willing to take the necessary steps, the United States will be a partner in creating environments that foster new businesses and foster an investment climate that will attract capital from everywhere.

So we know there's a lot of work to do, and we're counting on you to help us. For if one thing unites all entrepreneurs, it is a belief in the possible, a belief that your world and the larger world can be made better, that new ideas can solve old problems, problems that are centuries old, and that one person's hard work can lift many lives. Now, you know these things are true because you prove them every single day.

I think one of the clear lessons that we have learned from working with so many people around the world over the course of so many years is that the old story about whether you give a person a fish or you help a person to learn to fish is so universally true. And what we want to do is unleash the talent and creativity that exists across the world, in every community. I'm often amazed at how resourceful people are in the poorest of the poor families and neighborhoods and communities. People solve problems that nobody's helping them solve. And I often think about the young people that I've worked with over the years who were denied opportunities for education, who didn't come from stable families, who were told time and time again that they couldn't do something or they weren't worth anything, but somehow found the strength inside to discard what the outside world told them and to believe in themselves. It really takes that level of belief to overcome the obstacles that we see preventing progress, stifling creativity.

So I urge you to continue to innovate, experiment, and lead; to use your resources and the power of your example to bring more people into this exciting activity that will improve lives, raise incomes, expand the horizons of so many who otherwise would not have a chance. I am

absolutely convinced that building a strong economic foundation, creating a middle class, is essential to building good governance, rule of law, sustainable development, and so much more.

So we may come from different places. We may have different histories, different cultures. But we believe in the power of the individual, or you would not be here. We believe that a person with a good idea, willing to work hard, can really make a difference.

So I thank you for what you've already accomplished, and I look forward to hearing about all of your achievements in the years ahead. The United States is very proud to support you as you make your way, as you decide your future.

And I finally would just ask that you think about other opportunities that could be provided through this partnership that we are creating for a new beginning. You are the experts in where you live, where you work, where you are building your futures. So please don't be hesitant about letting us know what is working and what's not working, because we believe in taking hard looks at the facts and evidence. And if something's not working, we want to change direction and get on a path that is more likely to succeed. We need your feedback, we need your honest and constructive criticism, we invite it. We more than invite it; we welcome it.

So thank you for being part of this exciting adventure that we have launched today with this summit. I'm so pleased that you all were willing to travel here and maybe take a little bit of a chance on what you were going to find at the other end, to try to figure out what was this really all about and where was it leading, if anywhere. But now it's up to both of us. We can put on the conference and provide the space, but it's really up to each of you to determine whether this venture can really be a success. But having read a lot of the bios and a lot of the information about the participants, I think it's a pretty safe bet. So we're going to work with you. And thank you for believing in a better future for everyone. (Applause.)

27 April 2010

Presidential Summit on Entrepreneurship: A New Beginning

Highlights public-private partnership among U.S. and Muslim communities

The White House
April 26, 2010

FACT SHEET

A NEW BEGINNING -- THE PRESIDENTIAL SUMMIT ON ENTREPRENEURSHIP

The Presidential Summit on Entrepreneurship (April 26-27, 2010) will highlight the important roles that entrepreneurship can play in expanding opportunity at home and abroad, while deepening engagement among the United States and Muslim communities around the world. It will bring together approximately 250 successful entrepreneurs from more than fifty countries; identify ways to advance economic and social entrepreneurship; build networks among stakeholders in entrepreneurship; and, provide an opportunity to establish partnerships that advance entrepreneurship.

The United States is committed to working with entrepreneurs around the world, including those in Muslim-majority countries and Muslim communities. In addition to partnering with other governments and multilateral organizations, promoting entrepreneurship will require new public-private partnerships. At the Summit on Entrepreneurship, the U.S. Government is pleased to highlight a number of selected programs and partnerships that will help expand mutual understanding and mutual opportunity. Further details regarding these programs and partnerships will be provided by the lead Department or agency supporting them:

EXCHANGE PROGRAMS

Entrepreneurs for a New Beginning

Entrepreneurs for a New Beginning is a new two-way professional exchange program for rising business and social entrepreneurs. The Department of State is forging relationships to offer participants educational seminars, mentorship, and first-hand experience in the business place with American entrepreneurs. The program will connect participants with outbound American entrepreneurs and will examine strategies used in the United States to enhance the capacities of young business managers, to develop a spirit of entrepreneurship and small business enterprise, and to strengthen societies through the pursuit of social entrepreneurship. This program will

bring 100 entrepreneurs to the U.S. over the next 4 years and will also work with private sector partners to send 100 American entrepreneurs abroad over the next four years. More information can be obtained from the Department of State.

Science and Technology Education Exchanges

During his speech in Cairo, the President said that “education and innovation will be the currency of the 21st century.” This new science and technology exchange program will bring 25 science teachers from Muslim-majority countries and communities to examine effective methods of teaching science at the primary and secondary school levels. The program will explore how to nurture and support hands-on science education, how to demonstrate the relevance of science for children, and how to create a setting in which children actively engage in scientific learning. In addition, the participants will observe extracurricular science camps and science fair educational programs that emphasize experiential learning.

Professional Technical Exchanges for Women

TechWomen is a new professional mentorship program for women from eligible countries who are working in the field of technology. Selected participants will travel to the United States in the spring of 2011 to work with mid-level female employees in various companies in technology hubs such as Silicon Valley. Upon the completion of their mentorships, select American counterparts will travel to the participants’ home regions to offer skills development and networking workshops for a broader range of women.

Young Entrepreneurs Program

Launched in September 2009, the Young Entrepreneurs Program is a professional exchange program that promotes entrepreneurial thinking, job creation, business planning, and management skills to assist young professionals. As part of the YEP, the Department of State will launch a new initiative called Education to Employment Fellows. Beginning in 2009, this initiative will bring at least thirty fellows from eligible countries to the United States for internships that will aid their professional development.

DIRECT ASSISTANCE FOR ENTREPRENEURSHIP

USAID’s Commitment to Support Entrepreneurship

USAID will support all stages of the entrepreneurship ecosystem by working with partners to strengthen the business enabling environment, expand educational opportunities, facilitate market opportunities and access to capital, and build connectedness and business support. Specific efforts USAID plans to undertake include:

- Support business enabling environment reforms in 15 partner countries.

- Undertake surveys in five countries (Bangladesh, Pakistan, Nigeria, Turkey, and Egypt) and use their findings to work together with local private partners to promote supportive environments to encourage economic growth.
- Provide open source web-and media-based entrepreneurship education targeted for women, youth, and other underserved audiences on topics ranging from starting and growing a business to the use of internet technologies.
- Support local educational programs to build capacity among business owners and their employees.
- Facilitate entrepreneurs' access to private sources of finance (e.g., microfinance institutions, venture capital funds, commercial banks).
- Develop and expand business innovation centers.
- Develop partnerships to expand the number of companies and volunteers assisting entrepreneurs in developing countries, thereby building partnerships between entrepreneurs in the U.S. and abroad.

Small Business Administration Partnerships with Oman, Bahrain, Tunisia

SBA and the Department of State have entered into several agreements with Oman, Bahrain, and Tunisia to assist women entrepreneurs in the Middle East and North Africa. Through these Memorandums of Understanding, SBA will provide guidance and assistance in developing and implementing loan guarantee programs, government procurement policies, entrepreneurial development programs and business centers, and support to strengthen women and small and medium enterprises.

Global Entrepreneurship Program

A new effort led by the Department of State in partnership with the Department of Commerce, USAID, OPIC, and the Millennium Challenge Corporation, the Global Entrepreneurship Program will coordinate, integrate, and leverage existing U.S. Government and private sector resources, partnerships, and programs to support six methods of supporting entrepreneurs: Identify, Train, Connect, Guide to funding, Sustain, and Celebrate. The proposed program has twelve focus countries throughout the world, including seven Muslim-majority countries. The Department of State and USAID have launched the first pilot program in Egypt and will soon launch the second in Indonesia.

FINANCING FOR ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND INNOVATION

Global Technology and Innovation Fund

In response to President Obama's Cairo speech last June, the Overseas Private Investment Corporation (OPIC) launched the global technology and innovation call for privately managed

investment funds in October 2009. The Funds will make investments in start up and growth oriented companies in the telecommunications, media, and technology sectors. Some Funds will utilize a “technology transfer” strategy by importing existing technology in developed countries to increase innovation and efficiency in sectors such as healthcare, education, and infrastructure. In addition, the Funds will promote the economic and social development of the target countries. With the private sector capital catalyzed by OPIC, these Funds will have the potential to mobilize over \$2 billion in private equity capital for Muslim-majority countries. All Funds remain subject to review and approval of OPIC’s Board of Directors.

STRENGTHENING PARTNERSHIPS

Partners for a New Beginning

Partners for a New Beginning will be a group of eminent Americans from a variety of sectors – corporate, philanthropic, education, non-profit, entertainment – who will leverage resources and capabilities outside the U.S. Government to advance the vision for a new beginning with Muslim communities around the world. Partners for a New Beginning will be an independent, self-administered group that will operate in close coordination with the Department of State.

Expanding Ties With Silicon Valley

The Department of State will collaborate with partners in Silicon Valley to launch two of the first Silicon Valley-based incubators and venture capital funds in the Middle East, Turkey, and Southeast Asia. Both efforts will provide venture capital, Silicon Valley mentorship, technology and connectivity to emerging entrepreneurs in 5 locations – Jordan, Egypt, Lebanon, Turkey, and Malaysia. In addition to helping provide technological and financial expertise and access to capital and other services, these two efforts will help to build ties between business and educational communities in the United States and those in the countries in which it operates.

SUSTAINING A FOCUS ON ENTREPRENEURSHIP

The Summit on Entrepreneurship has helped catalyze conversations about entrepreneurship around the world. In the days immediately after the Summit, there will be over thirty related but independent events in the Washington, D.C. area. In months to come, several partners have expressed interest in hosting follow-on conferences, and these will be held in places ranging from Indonesia to Abu Dhabi, Iraq to Algeria, and France to Bahrain among others. Additionally, Prime Minister Erdogan has agreed to host the next Entrepreneurship Summit in Turkey in 2011.

27 April 2010

Presidential Summit on Entrepreneurship: E-Mentor Corps

Fact sheet defines mentorship program to advance entrepreneurship worldwide

U.S. Department of State
April 27, 2010

Fact Sheet

E-Mentor Corps

The E-Mentor Corps will call on business leaders and proven entrepreneurs in the United States and overseas (including the delegates at the Summit) to serve as E-Mentors to aspiring and emerging entrepreneurs around the world. Studies indicate that mentorship is vital to entrepreneurs' ability to be successful. The E-Mentor Corps will help to provide mentorship and in the process advance entrepreneurship, innovation and economic opportunity around the world.

E-Mentors will commit to provide guidance, insights and support to mentees for at least several hours per month for at least 3 months - via e-mail, telephone, video conference and other means of communication. It is hoped that many of these connections will spawn longer-term collaboration.

The Department of State will encourage mentors and mentees to connect through any number of channels and mechanisms. To facilitate connection, the Department of State has partnered with three platforms which will serve as options for mentor and mentee connection: Imagine-Network.org, Ning and LinkedIn.

The Department of State has received Statements of Intent from leading U.S. organizations signifying their commitment to go out to their networks to ask them to serve as E-Mentors: The Kauffmann Foundation and Global Entrepreneurship Week, Young Presidents' Organization (YPO), Endeavor, Techwadi, Intel, IBM, Ernst & Young, Financial Services Volunteer Corps, TechStars, Babson College, Global Business School Network and Businesses for Diplomatic Action. In addition, we will work with our extensive global network of Alumni from ECA exchange programs to include them, both as mentors and mentees.

The E-Mentor Corps will serve as a key component of the Corps of Business Volunteers that the President announced in his Cairo speech and the Virtual Global Network for Entrepreneurs that Secretary Clinton announced in her November 2009 Forum for the Future Speech in Morocco. It will advance entrepreneurship around the world and it will forge and deepen ties between entrepreneurs in the United States and entrepreneurs around the globe.

Entrepreneurship Facts

- From 1980-2005, firms less than five years old accounted for all net job growth in the United States - Business Dynamics Statistics Briefing: Jobs Created from Business Startups in the United States, January 2009
- Excluding startups, young firms—defined as one to five years of age—accounted for nearly two-thirds of job creation in 2007. - Where Will the Jobs Come From?, November 2009
- More than half of the companies on the 2009 Fortune 500 list were launched during a recession or bear market, along with nearly half of the firms on the 2008 Inc. list of America's fastest-growing companies. - The Economic Future Just Happened, June 2009
- In 2008, an average of 0.32% of adults created a new business each month, equaling about 530,000 new businesses per month. - Kauffman Index of Entrepreneurial Activity 1996-2008, April 2009
- Entrepreneurs are the answer. 70% of U.S. registered voters think the health of the economy depends on the success of entrepreneurs. -Luntz, Maslansky Strategic Research Survey (sample size: 816), September 2008
- Entrepreneurs have been responsible for 67% of the inventions and 95% of the radical innovations made since World War II. -The Public Forum Institute
- Many of America's leading firms, including Intel and Federal Express, depended on Small Business Administration funding when they were getting started. -The Public Forum Institute
- 95.1% of respondents to a survey of entrepreneurs themselves had earned bachelor's degrees, and 47% had more advanced degrees. -The Anatomy of an Entrepreneur, The Kauffman Foundation
- Less than 1% of entrepreneurs surveyed came from extremely rich or extremely poor backgrounds. -The Anatomy of an Entrepreneur, The Kauffman Foundation
- 69.9% of entrepreneurs surveyed indicated they were married when they launched their first business. An additional 5.2% were divorced, separated, or widowed. -The Anatomy of an Entrepreneur, The Kauffman Foundation
- 59.7% of entrepreneurs surveyed indicated they had at least one child when they launched their first business, and 43.5% had two or more children. -The Anatomy of an Entrepreneur, The Kauffman Foundation
- The majority of the entrepreneurs in the sample were serial entrepreneurs. The average number of businesses launched by respondents was approximately 2.3. -The Anatomy of an Entrepreneur, The Kauffman Foundation
- Entrepreneurs are usually better educated than their parents. -The Anatomy of an Entrepreneur, The Kauffman Foundation
- The majority of respondents (75.%) had worked as employees at other companies for more than six years before launching their own companies. -The Anatomy of an Entrepreneur, The Kauffman Foundation
- Entrepreneurship doesn't always run in the family. More than half (51.%) of respondents were the first in their families to launch a business. -The Anatomy of an Entrepreneur, The Kauffman Foundation

- Young businesses are 3% more productive than mature businesses and their rate increases up to 5% more productive after they have been open for five years or more.
- Contrary to popularly held assumptions, the highest rate of entrepreneurial activity belongs to the 55-64 age group over the past decade. The 20-34 age bracket has the lowest. - The Coming Entrepreneurship Boom, June 2009
- Most high-tech founders come from middle-class or upper-lower-class backgrounds, are well-educated, and married with children. - The Anatomy of an Entrepreneur: Family Background and Motivation, July 2009
- Angel investors participating in organized groups achieve an average 27% internal rate of return. - Returns to Angel Investors in Groups, November 2007
- External debt markets are increasingly important to startups as they age, providing 62% of financing in 2007 compared to 40% in 2004, their first year of operation. - An Overview of the Kauffman Firm Survey: Results from the 2004-2007 Data, April 2009
- In 2008, the immigrant rate of entrepreneurial activity—0.51%—was substantially higher than the native-born U.S. population—0.28%. - Kauffman Index of Entrepreneurial Activity 1996-2008, April 2009
- More than a quarter of technology and engineering companies started in the United States from 1995 to 2005 had at least one key founder who was foreign-born. - Education, Entrepreneurship, and Immigration: America's New Immigrant Entrepreneurs, Part II, June 2007
- Foreign nationals residing in the United States were named as inventors or co-inventors in 25.6% of international patent applications filed in the U.S. in 2006. - Intellectual Property, the Immigration Backlog, and a Reverse Brain-Drain: America's New Immigrant Entrepreneurs, Part III, August 2007
- What do Microsoft, Disney, Genentech, McDonald's, Southwest Airlines, Johnson & Johnson, and Krispy Kreme all have in common? All were founded in recessions, depressions, or bear markets.
- Think tech companies are founded only by 20-somethings? Think again. The average age of U.S.-born tech founders when they started their companies was 39. In fact, twice as many were older than 50 as were younger than 25.
- Let's hear it for the next generation. Four in ten U.S. young people ages 8 to 21 have or would like to start their own business someday, and 63% agree that they have the ability to successfully start their own business. -Harris Interactive® Survey (sample size: 2,438), July/August 2007

27 April 2010

Summing Up the Summit: Some Doubts, Mostly Enthusiasm

Presidential Summit on Entrepreneurship creates connections, hope

By Andrzej Zwanecki
Staff Writer

Washington — Tarik Yousef of Dubai wanted to be a government bureaucrat when he was young because there was no alternative for ambitious youngsters in his country. His dream was shared by many of his Arab peers.

The new generation is different, Yousef told delegates in Washington to the April 26–27 [Presidential Summit on Entrepreneurship](#). From his experience as the dean of the Dubai School of Government, he knows that Arab youth increasingly see entrepreneurship as an alternative.

[Nabil Shalaby](#), an educator and promoter of entrepreneurship in Egypt and Saudi Arabia, agreed that entrepreneurial energy is there among the younger generation. “It just needs to be nurtured and tapped,” he said.

On day two of the summit, the entrepreneurs — who hail from roughly 60 countries and were meeting in Washington at the invitation of the Obama administration — expressed hope that this entrepreneurial energy will create jobs, bring robust economic development and drive other positive changes.

“Real change comes from the bottom up, and that is why we are here,” [President Obama had told the entrepreneurs in a speech the evening before, April 26.](#)

Discussions about how entrepreneurs can become agents of change were at the center of the summit’s agenda. It wasn’t a typical Washington event; it was more dialogue than lecture, observed Elmira Bayrasli of Endeavor, a U.S. nonprofit group. Even the seating in the ballroom where panel discussions took place — rows of round tables, instead of chairs lined up to face a stage, and no podium — encouraged an exchange of ideas.

“Moderators [administration officials] were allowing the panelists and invited delegates to speak their minds, even when it might have been uncomfortable to do so,” Bayrasli said.

Entrepreneurs shared problems and sometimes found solutions they hadn’t thought about earlier, said Sofiane Chaib, managing director of a foreign-

language center in Algeria. "At times it felt like a group therapy session," he said.

Those whose achievements had been recognized by the president in his speech were ecstatic. "It's like 10 years of dedication [to your business] and then you're recognized for a split second by the president of the world — elected by the American people, but ... really the president of the world," explained Soraya Salti, from Jordan, who was one of those mentioned by Obama.

Salti and other entrepreneurs in attendance believe that the enthusiasm at the summit will help them carry out new projects. Waed al Taweel, a student from the Palestinian Territories, said it might help her realize her dream enterprise — a recreation center for children and teens in her homeland.

But with expectations as varied as the backgrounds of the 250 entrepreneurs attending, not everyone was leaving Washington perfectly happy. Some delegates were enthusiastic about the culture of entrepreneurship in America, but disheartened by what they said was little or no support for their efforts in their home countries. Saad Al Barrak, head of a major mobile telecom company that operates in the Middle East and Africa, took issue with the summit itself. He said the event sometimes felt like "an entrepreneurship refresher course."

By day two of the summit, the administration was announcing concrete initiatives. These mostly private-public partnerships include a fund that potentially can mobilize more than \$2 billion in private-sector investments and internships, professional development, mentoring, training and networking programs for entrepreneurs from countries with Muslim majorities, as well as projects promoting high-tech business incubators and providing seed money. Administration officials said that the Washington summit is only the beginning in the process of elevating entrepreneurship to a more potent force for change. Several follow-on meetings were discussed; Turkey will be the next host of a similar event.

Craig Newmark, founder of Craigslist, said continuity is important. "If you follow through and you keep doing more of it, eventually things can grow from the grass roots," he said.

Some of the entrepreneurs at the summit found immediate personal gain. Al Taweel, 20, the youngest attendee, will be going home with an offer of a full scholarship from the president of Babson College, just outside Boston, to get her master's degree in business administration.

27 April 2010

Women Entrepreneurs Can Ignite Social Change

Entrepreneurship Summit session devoted to women

By Charles W. Corey
Staff Writer

Washington — Proclaiming that women have a “unique opportunity to ignite social change,” Farah Pandith, the U.S. Department of State’s special representative to Muslim communities, opened the final panel at the Presidential Summit on Entrepreneurship on April 27. The panel focused on “unleashing the power of women entrepreneurs.”

Pandith told the women they are role models and agents for long-term change. “Women entrepreneurs can impact generations, creating a ripple effect by setting an example for young girls. One person can inspire change on the local level. Through investing in the ideas, the creativity, the passion and vision of women, lives can change inside and outside the home.”

She was joined on the panel by Valerie Jarrett, assistant and senior adviser to President Obama; Muhammad Yunus, founder of Grameen Bank; Dina Powell, global head for corporate engagement at Goldman Sachs; Tamara Abed, director of Aarong; and Faridah Nambi Kigongo, founder and managing director of Nambi Children’s Initiatives.

Yunus told the summit that his business started bringing financial services to poor people and not just poor women. “Loan-sharking in our village” in Bangladesh “enraged me,” he said.

He said he went to a bank and asked them to make loans and they refused. “So I started complaining about the banking institutions. ... They give loans to people who already had money. They would not give money to people who did not have money. I said, ‘This is ridiculous, this should be the other way. Not only do you reject poor people, you reject all women.’ That is how I got into the woman issue.”

In Bangladesh at that time, he said, not even 1 percent of the borrowers in the banking system were women. “Something is wrong in the system,” he told himself, and then he started offering himself as a guarantor for women’s loans.

At first, he said, women were reluctant to borrow funds because of cultural sensitivities. "It took a lot of patience ... six years' time ... to achieve a 50-50" ratio of women and men borrowers, he said.

Loans to women brought much more money to the family than loans made to men, Yunus said, and as a result he began to focus on lending to women. "Today we have over 8 million borrowers; 97 percent are women and they own the bank. ... They sit on the board and make the decisions."

Then, Yunus said, they started educating the children of those women to build new generations who are skilled. Now there are 52,000 students in school thanks to Grameen, he said.

These students complain there are no jobs, but Yunus says that is the wrong attitude. He said he tells those students to pledge every morning, "I am not a job seeker. I am a job giver." He encourages them to use their new skills to create new jobs for themselves and many others.

In the end, Yunus said, "all human beings are entrepreneurs."

Dina Powell of Goldman Sachs, who immigrated to the United States as a child from Egypt, told the group her company's program "10,000 Women" aims to educate 10,000 women entrepreneurs worldwide.

"Investing in women as entrepreneurs is a smart investment," she said.

The 10,000 Women Program seeks to reach 10,000 women with pragmatic business and management education on how to write a business plan or access capital. Some 2,000 women have already been educated under the program, she said, and five of them were entrepreneurs attending the summit.

Tamara Abed is a former investment banker who also worked for Goldman Sachs and is now director of Aarong in Bangladesh, which supports some 65,000 women artisans. She said women often have the drive and passion for doing business and for many, it is a "fight for survival" if they have no husband and children to support. "Women are the agent of change. If you can inspire them, you can empower them."

Faridah Nambi Kigongo is the founder and managing director of Nambi Children Initiatives in Uganda, which works to improve the lives of vulnerable children and assists women with health care and basic needs.

She started a local television show in 2007 called the *Nambi Talk Show*. It features elders sharing local wisdom and knowledge.

Kigongo, who has a master's of business administration degree from Edinburgh Business School in Scotland, said she founded the children's center on the severance package she received after resigning her well-paying aviation job. "It was a conscious decision for me," she said, to look after the children.

"Coming from my background, I had productive, educated parents and seeing these children, I said, 'OK, these are my neighbors, I need to do something about them.' ... That was the beginning for me." Moving on to work with women entrepreneurs was a natural fit, she added.

President Obama hosted the summit, which covered issues including technology and innovation, access to capital, unleashing youth and women's entrepreneurship, mentoring and networking, fostering a culture of entrepreneurship, promoting and enabling business, and social entrepreneurship.

Some 250 entrepreneurs from around the world attended, along with a host of American entrepreneurs, business executives and top U.S. government officials.

Participants came from Afghanistan, Albania, Algeria, Australia, Austria, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Brazil, Brunei, Cameroon, Canada, China, Denmark, Djibouti, Egypt, Finland, France, The Gambia, Germany, India, Indonesia, Iraq, Israel, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Kosovo, Kuwait, Kyrgyzstan, Lebanon, Libya, Madagascar, Malaysia, Mauritania, Morocco, Netherlands, Niger, Nigeria, Norway, Oman, Pakistan, the Palestinian Territories, Paraguay, the Philippines, Qatar, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Syria, Tajikistan, Tunisia, Turkey, the United Arab Emirates, Uganda, the United Kingdom, the United States and Yemen.

26 April 2010

Entrepreneurship in Arab World Changing Before Expert's Eyes

Nabil Shalaby tries to fire up the entrepreneurial spirit of students at King Fahd University for Petroleum and Minerals in Dhahran, Saudi Arabia.



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By Andrzej Zwanecki

Staff Writer

Washington — Nabil Shalaby made money for the first time at age 9 as a printer. Using a plastic toy, he made miniature name tags and sold them to his father, mother and other members of his big family in Mansoura, Egypt. Eighteen years later, with two partners, he started a company in a modern-day version: desktop publishing. Later, he sold his share for a handsome profit.

Today, Shalaby promotes entrepreneurship in Egypt and Saudi Arabia as a consultant, manager, innovator, educator and author. He has developed and run support programs for small businesses and helped start high-tech incubators.

In 1998, Shalaby managed the first technology incubator hosted by a university in Egypt. He realized quickly that locating the incubator on the campus of Mansoura University had advantages and disadvantages.

"The proximity to researchers and academic experts was vital," Shalaby said. But the campus was walled off from the rest of the city, with security guards posted at the gate. "This restricted access and commingling, and free access and exchange of ideas are necessary for technology innovation to thrive." He moved the incubator outside campus walls and implemented

other ideas to foster close relationships among researchers, entrepreneurs, donors and financiers.

A chance to promote entrepreneurship on a broader scale came in 2000, when a regional chamber of commerce in Saudi Arabia hired Shalaby to establish the first support center for small businesses and young entrepreneurs. Initially, he worked as a one-man band, planning events, providing consultation and training, attracting financing, and designing the first small business incubator in the kingdom. Since then, 23 local chambers of commerce in the kingdom have opened business support centers, involving many more people in entrepreneurship. In 2008, the King Abdulaziz City for Science and Technology launched the BADIR-ICT technology incubator in Riyadh, the first in Saudi Arabia.

A millennium ago, Arab traders plied the intricate routes of the Silk Road that connected much of the Eurasian landmass. At the same time, Arab inventors gave the world the crankshaft, surgical instruments and other inventions. Shalaby is convinced that the same spirit of innovation and entrepreneurship is alive and well in the new Arab generation, especially in the Gulf states. It just needs to be nurtured and tapped, he said.

He's going to talk about how to do that at George Washington University in Washington when he attends the [Presidential Summit on Entrepreneurship](#) April 26–27.

Shalaby expects the move toward entrepreneurship — driven more by economic and social reality than promoters like him — to accelerate in the Arab world in the coming years.

27 April 2010

Twenty-three African Entrepreneurs Attend President's Summit

All agree: Education is key



President Obama greets delegates at the Presidential Summit on Entrepreneurship on April 26 in Washington.

By Charles W. Corey
Staff Writer

Washington — Twenty-three entrepreneurs — including 11 women — from 10 African countries attended the Presidential Summit on Entrepreneurship. Five of that group discussed with *America.gov* the importance of entrepreneurs to a country's economy and offered their reaction to the summit. All agreed that education and skills development are crucial.

Ibrahim Moukouop, who is president of Megasoft, a software management and Internet development company in Cameroon, praised the summit as a good idea that brings entrepreneurs together from Africa and worldwide to discuss common issues and network for business opportunities.

To promote entrepreneurship across Africa, he said, four things must happen. First, authorities must "fight against fraud" and promote a transparent business environment. Second, promoting education at all levels is important because to flourish, businesses need an educated work force. Third, he said, improved infrastructure and expanded telecom networks are essential. "There is not enough infrastructure" now to aid business in Africa, he said. And fourth, access to capital is key, along with prompt payment to small businesses.

In particular, Moukouop said, Africans need risk capital or venture capitalists who will invest in new business ideas, as well as a system of patents and copyrights to protect ideas for projects. That is important, he said, because

when you seek financing from a bank, “you are always afraid the bank will steal your project idea” or business plan.

Moukhouop said it is important for African governments to understand both the crucial role entrepreneurs and businesses play in contributing to a country’s economic growth and development, and the urgent need to fight corruption at all levels.

He said the summit has featured great panelists but added that he would liked more time for discussion, networking and an exchange of information on access to capital.

Amadou Baro, a social entrepreneur from Mauritania, agreed that education is the key for successful entrepreneurs and a country’s long-term economic development. Being a successful entrepreneur depends on having the right skills, and Baro teaches many of those basic skills in a program in one of the toughest neighborhoods in Mauritania’s capital city.

Alamine Ousmane Mey, chief executive officer of Cameroon’s Afriland Bank, called the summit a great opportunity to network with a wide range of bright, experienced business people.

With the plan for another summit next year in Turkey, Mey said this can be a successful movement to “engage with the Muslim community and the entrepreneurs who shape the world and contribute to change the world.”



Attendees at the Presidential Summit on Entrepreneurship listen as President Obama speaks on April 26 in Washington.

It is entrepreneurs, he said, “who generate wealth, create jobs and advance our continent, our economies and our world.”

To reduce poverty, he said, you must create wealth, and that is done through entrepreneurs who are ambitious, educated and skilled. “We need to celebrate these people who are doing a terrific job,” he said, and also celebrate social entrepreneurs, who give back to their community.

Mey believes that entrepreneurs can foster the economic growth and development that ultimately will solve problems of insecurity, instability, war and terror worldwide.

Leila Mohamed Bouamatou, whose family runs a foundation to help the blind in her country and advises youth on skills and education, is head of the treasury department at Générale de Banque de Mauritanie in Mauritania. She said she has been impressed with those attending the summit, and said that she is seeing more and more young people getting motivated to go into private-sector business.

"Unfortunately, what a lot of African countries are facing is a lack of education," she said. And without education, people do not have access to the skills needed to prosper.

Rehmah N. Kasule is the chief executive officer of Century Marketing in Uganda, a company that does branding and marketing and mentors children to be future leaders.

A large proportion of the Ugandan population is younger than 30 years old, Kasule said, so skills teaching is critical to the country's economic growth and development. "The only way we can make a better future for our country is with [teaching] our children" the skills of economic independence and employment. "We want them to become job creators instead of job seekers."

One hundred thirty-seven people have graduated from her program and gone on to be business managers or leaders, she said, with about 20 percent becoming entrepreneurs, starting their own businesses. "In the past, it used to be someone would finish the program with the mindset 'I want to look for a job,' now whenever they finish, they feel like they want to be their own boss."

Kasule said she has been pleased with the diversity at the conference. "There is a lot of diversity among the people, and if we really sit down and tap into each other's resources, I think the only way is up."

President Obama hosted the summit, which featured plenary sessions on important issues, including technology and innovation, access to capital, unleashing youth and women's entrepreneurship, mentoring and networking, fostering a culture of entrepreneurship, promoting and enabling business, and social entrepreneurship.

Some 250 entrepreneurs from around the world attended, along with a host of American entrepreneurs, business executives and top U.S. government officials.

Participants came from Afghanistan, Albania, Algeria, Australia, Austria, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Brazil, Brunei, Cameroon, Canada, China, Denmark, Djibouti, Egypt, Finland, France, The Gambia, Germany, India, Indonesia, Iraq, Israel, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Kosovo, Kuwait, Kyrgyzstan, Lebanon, Libya, Madagascar, Malaysia, Mauritania, Morocco, Netherlands, Niger, Nigeria, Norway, Oman, Pakistan, the Palestinian Territories, Paraguay, the Philippines, Qatar, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Syria, Tajikistan, Tunisia, Turkey, the United Arab Emirates, Uganda, the United Kingdom, the United States and Yemen.

26 April 2010

Entrepreneurs Share Aspirations, Experiences at Obama Summit



Sandiaga Uno, Indonesia: "I hadn't heard the word 'entrepreneurship' until I went to college."

By Andrzej Zwanecki
Staff Writer

Washington — In some countries and communities, entrepreneurship is not deeply ingrained. Sandiaga Uno, of Indonesia, said he first heard the word "entrepreneurship" when he was in college. Since then, he has started a private equity company in Indonesia.

A favorable business climate doesn't always go far enough for entrepreneurship to thrive. "You have to have a culture ... willing to accept entrepreneurs as change agents," said Jerry Yang, chief executive of the Internet portal Yahoo.

Uno and Yang are participating in the April 26–27 [Presidential Summit on Entrepreneurship](#) in Washington, which aims to promote entrepreneurship as the most effective way to tap energy and skills of people, who, as Pakistani-born entrepreneur Naeem Zafar put it, "don't wait for the government to create a job for them."

When the White House cast a net to different corners of the world for delegates to invite to the summit, it didn't quite expect that the group that would come to Washington would be so diverse in so many ways. After hearing from about 7,000 people, the Obama administration invited 250 delegates from roughly 60 countries to make good on the president's [promise, made in a June 2009 speech in Cairo](#), to host a summit on entrepreneurship "to identify how we can deepen ties between business leaders, foundations and social entrepreneurs in the United States and Muslim communities around the world."

In the end, the invitees also included entrepreneurs from non-Muslim communities. But the diversity of their backgrounds doesn't end there. Delegates range from international and regional stars such [Muhammad Yunus](#), the father of microfinance, and Mo Ibrahim, the founder of the most successful telecom company in Africa, to people who are known only in their local communities. Delegates work as business consultants, social entrepreneurs and educators. They range in age from people in their 20s to a 79-year-old veteran business owner. Some send tweets and write blogs; others can solve problems in their local communities by sitting down with tribal elders and leaders.



Amadou Baro, Mauritania: "We have to build the bridges, to know what everyone is doing."

Most of the delegates came to Washington with similar expectations — to learn from each other, to exchange ideas, to network with their American counterparts and to obtain support for their enterprises. For Amadou Baro, who established a nonprofit group in Mauritania, the summit is an opportunity to do all these things. Usually, "we don't even know what people in Senegal, our neighbor, are doing," he said.

Zafar, the Pakistani-born entrepreneur who started six high-tech businesses in California's Silicon Valley, said that these entrepreneurs will connect. "All you have to do is put them in the same room and leave," he said.

Craigslist founder Craig Newmark, who is attending the summit, said, "If you connect people and keep engaging them, you follow through and you keep doing more of it, eventually things can grow from the grass roots."

Many delegates started their enterprises for more than just profits, and sometimes with only the public good in mind. From delegates' conversations and questions to panelists, it is clear they share a mission to make positive changes in their communities. Those who work to empower women and tap their entrepreneurial potential have been particularly vocal about their case even before the summit. (See the [New Enterprise blog](#) to read some of their

views.) Women entrepreneurs from countries as different as Afghanistan, Albania and Qatar say that Islam does not prevent women from playing a more active role in their business communities.

Successful women entrepreneurs at the summit are talking about creating educational opportunities for girls, helping women start businesses and serving as mentors and role models. Nuria Farah is one of the delegates. She became the first woman from the volatile and impoverished North Eastern province of Kenya to attain a university degree. Later, with other prominent women, she started a boarding school for girls from that region.

The success of many women and men entrepreneurs in emerging-market and developing countries often is hard-earned. Nasra Malin, who co-founded a major telecom company in Somalia, has to deal regularly with extortion attempts and threats of violence directed at her business. A brother of Masooma Habibi, who co-founded a consulting firm in Afghanistan, was kidnapped by the Taliban while on a business trip.

But many of the entrepreneurs at the summit have been able to turn failures or obstacles into opportunities. Tri Mumpuni, who created an enterprise that brings hydroelectric energy, often the first reliable electricity of any kind, to villages across Indonesia, offered to train former rebels to make parts for turbines.

26 April 2010

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[enlarge photo](#)



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run support programs for small businesses and helped start high-tech incubators.

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"The proximity to researchers and academic experts was vital," Shalaby said. But the campus was walled off from the rest of the city, with security guards posted at the gate. "This restricted access and commingling, and free access and exchange of ideas are necessary for technology innovation to thrive." He moved the incubator outside campus walls and implemented other ideas to foster close relationships among researchers, entrepreneurs, donors and financiers.

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Shalaby expects the move toward entrepreneurship — driven more by economic and social reality than promoters like him — to accelerate in the Arab world in the coming years.

"I am just a person who tries to do a positive change, one step at a time," he said.

26 April 2010

President Obama's Remarks at Summit on Entrepreneurship

President cites partnerships, important role of entrepreneurs

THE WHITE HOUSE
Office of the Press Secretary
For Immediate Release
April 26, 2010

REMARKS BY THE PRESIDENT AT THE PRESIDENTIAL SUMMIT ON ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Ronald Reagan Building and International Trade Center
Washington, D.C.

6:05 P.M. EDT

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you very much. Everybody, please have a seat. Good evening, everyone, and welcome to Washington.

In my life, and as President, I have had the great pleasure of visiting many of your countries, and I've always been grateful for the warmth and the hospitality that you and your fellow citizens have shown me. And tonight, I appreciate the opportunity to return the hospitality.

For many of you, I know this is the first time visiting our country. So let me say, on behalf of the American people, welcome to the United States of America. (Applause.)

It is an extraordinary privilege to welcome you to this Presidential Summit on Entrepreneurship. This has been a coordinated effort across my administration, and I want to thank all the hardworking folks and leaders at all the departments and agencies who made it possible, and who are here tonight.

That includes our United States Trade Representative, Ambassador Ron Kirk. Where's Ron? There he is. (Applause.) I especially want to thank the two departments and leaders who took the lead on this summit -- Secretary of Commerce Gary Locke and Secretary of State Hillary Clinton. Please give them a big round of applause. (Applause.)

We're joined by members of Congress who work every day to help their constituents realize the American Dream, and whose life stories reflect the diversity and equal opportunity that we cherish as Americans: Nydia Velazquez, who is also, by the way, the chairwoman of our Small Business Committee in the House of Representatives. (Applause.) Keith Ellison is here. (Applause.) And Andre Carson is here. (Applause.)

Most of all, I want to thank all of you for being part of this historic event. You've traveled from across the United States and nearly 60 countries, from Latin America to Africa, Europe to Central Asia, from the Middle East to Southeast Asia.

And you bring with you the rich tapestry of the world's great traditions and great cultures. You carry within you the beauty of different colors and creeds, races and religions. You're visionaries who pioneered new industries and young entrepreneurs looking to build a business or a community.

But we've come together today because of what we share -- a belief that we are all bound together by certain common aspirations. To live with dignity. To get an education. To live healthy lives. Maybe to start a business, without having to pay a bribe to anybody. To speak freely and have a say in how we are governed. To live in peace and security and to give our children a better future.

But we're also here because we know that over the years, despite all we have in common, the United States and Muslim communities around the world too often fell victim to mutual mistrust.

And that's why I went to Cairo nearly one year ago and called for a new beginning between the United States and Muslim communities -- a new beginning based on mutual interest and mutual respect. I knew that this vision would not be fulfilled in a single year, or even several years. But I knew we had to begin and that all of us have responsibilities to fulfill.

As President, I've worked to ensure that America once again meets its responsibilities, especially when it comes to the security and political issues that have often been a source of tension. The United States is responsibly ending the war in Iraq, and we will partner with Iraqi people for their long-term prosperity and security. In Afghanistan, in Pakistan and beyond, we're forging new partnerships to isolate violent extremists, but also to combat corruption and foster the development that improves lives and communities.

I say it again tonight: Despite the inevitable difficulties, so long as I am President, the United States will never waver in our pursuit of a two-state solution that ensures the rights and security of both Israelis and Palestinians. (Applause.) And around the world, the United States of America will continue to stand with those who seek justice and progress and the human rights and dignity of all people.

But even as I committed the United States to addressing these security and political concerns, I also made it clear in Cairo that we needed something else -- a sustained effort to listen to each other and to learn from each other, to respect one another. And I pledged to forge a new partnership, not simply between governments, but also between people on the issues that matter most in their daily lives -- in your lives.

Now, many questioned whether this was possible. Yet over the past year, the United States has been reaching out and listening. We've joined interfaith dialogues and held town halls, roundtables and listening sessions with thousands of people around the world, including many of

you. And like so many people, you've extended your hand in return, each in your own way, as entrepreneurs and educators, as leaders of faith and of science.

I have to say, perhaps the most innovative response was from Dr. Naif al-Mutawa of Kuwait, who joins us here tonight. Where is Dr. Mutawa? (Applause.) His comic books have captured the imagination of so many young people with superheroes who embody the teachings and tolerance of Islam. After my speech in Cairo, he had a similar idea. So in his comic books, Superman and Batman reached out to their Muslim counterparts. (Laughter.) And I hear they're making progress, too. (Laughter.) Absolutely. (Applause.)

By listening to each other we've been able to partner with each other. We've expanded educational exchanges, because knowledge is the currency of the 21st century. Our distinguished science envoys have been visiting several of your countries, exploring ways to increase collaboration on science and technology.

We're advancing global health, including our partnership with the Organization of the Islamic Conference, to eradicate polio. This is just one part of our broader engagement with the OIC, led by my Special Envoy, Rashad Hussain, who joins us here tonight. Where's Rashad? (Applause.)

And we're partnering to expand economic prosperity. At a government level, I'd note that putting the G20 in the lead on global economic decision-making has brought more voices to the table -- including Turkey, Saudi Arabia, India and Indonesia. And here today, we're fulfilling my commitment in Cairo to deepen ties between business leaders, foundations and entrepreneurs in the United States and Muslim communities around the world.

Now, I know some have asked -- given all the security and political and social challenges we face, why a summit on entrepreneurship? The answer is simple.

Entrepreneurship -- because you told us that this was an area where we can learn from each other; where America can share our experience as a society that empowers the inventor and the innovator; where men and women can take a chance on a dream -- taking an idea that starts around a kitchen table or in a garage, and turning it into a new business and even new industries that can change the world.

Entrepreneurship -- because throughout history, the market has been the most powerful force the world has ever known for creating opportunity and lifting people out of poverty.

Entrepreneurship -- because it's in our mutual economic interest. Trade between the United States and Muslim-majority countries has grown. But all this trade, combined, is still only about the same as our trade with one country -- Mexico. So there's so much more we can do together, in partnership, to foster opportunity and prosperity in all our countries.

And social entrepreneurship -- because, as I learned as a community organizer in Chicago, real change comes from the bottom up, from the grassroots, starting with the dreams and passions of single individuals serving their communities.

And that's why we're here. We have Jerry Yang, who transformed how we communicate, with Yahoo. Is Jerry here? Where is he? He'll be here tomorrow. As well as entrepreneurs who have opened cybercafés and new forums on the Internet for discussion and development. Together, you can unleash the technologies that will help shape the 21st century.

We have successes like Dr. Mohamed Ibrahim, who I met earlier, who built a telecommunications empire that empowered people across Africa. And we have aspiring entrepreneurs who are looking to grow their businesses and hire new workers. Together you can address the challenges of accessing capital. We have trailblazers like Sheikha Hanadi of Qatar, along with Waed al Taweel, who I met earlier -- a 20-year-old student from the West Bank who wants to build recreation centers for Palestinian youth. So together, they represent the incredible talents of women entrepreneurs and remind us that countries that educate and empower women are countries that are far more likely to prosper. I believe that. (Applause.)

We have pioneers like Chris Hughes, who created Facebook, as well as an online community that brought so many young people into my campaign for President -- MyBarackObama.com. (Laughter.) We have people like Soraya Salti of Jordan who are empowering the young men and women who will be leaders of tomorrow. (Applause.) Together, they represent the great potential and expectations of young people around the world.

And we've got social entrepreneurs like Tri Mumpuni, who has helped rural communities in Indonesia -- (applause) -- harness the electricity, and revenues, of hydro-power. And Andeisha Farid, an extraordinary woman from Afghanistan, who's taken great risks to educate the next generation, one girl at a time. (Applause.) Together, they point the way to a future where progress is shared and prosperity is sustainable.

And I also happened to notice Dr. Yunus -- it's wonderful to see you again. I think so many people know the history of Grameen Bank and all the great work that's been done to help finance entrepreneurship among the poorest of the poor, first throughout South Asia, and now around the world.

So this is the incredible potential that you represent; the future we can seize together. So tonight I'm proud to announce a series of new partnerships and initiatives that will do just that.

The United States is launching several new exchange programs. We will bring business and social entrepreneurs from Muslim-majority countries to the United States and send their American counterparts to learn from your countries. (Applause.) So women in technology fields will have the opportunity to come to the United States for internships and professional development. And since innovation is central to entrepreneurship, we're creating new exchanges for science teachers.

We're forging new partnerships in which high-tech leaders from Silicon Valley will share their expertise -- in venture capital, mentorship, and technology incubators -- with partners in the Middle East and in Turkey and in Southeast Asia.

And tonight, I can report that the Global Technology and Innovation Fund that I announced in Cairo will potentially mobilize more than \$2 billion in investments. This is private capital, and it will unlock new opportunities for people across our countries in sectors like telecommunications, health care, education, and infrastructure.

And finally, I'm proud that we're creating here at this summit not only these programs that I've just mentioned, but it's not going to stop here. Together, we've sparked a new era of entrepreneurship -- with events all over Washington this week, and upcoming regional conferences around the world.

Tonight, I am pleased to announce that Prime Minister Erdogan has agreed to host the next Entrepreneurship Summit next year in Turkey. (Applause.) And so I thank the Prime Minister and the people and private sector leaders of Turkey for helping to sustain the momentum that we will unleash this week.

So as I said, there are those who questioned whether we could forge these new beginnings. And given the magnitude of the challenges we face in the world -- and let's face it, a lot of the bad news that comes through the television each and every day -- sometimes it can be tempting to believe that the goodwill and good works of ordinary people are simply insufficient to the task at hand. But to any who still doubt whether partnerships between people can remake our world, I say look at the men and women who are here today.

Look at the professor who came up with an idea -- micro-finance -- that empowered the rural poor across his country, especially women and children. That's the powerful example of Dr. Yunus.

Look what happened when Muhammad shared his idea with a woman from Pakistan, who has since lifted hundreds of thousands of families and children out of poverty through a foundation whose name literally means "miracle." That's the example of Roshaneh Zafar. (Applause.)

Look what happened when that idea spread across the world -- including to people like my own mother, who worked with the rural poor from Pakistan to Indonesia. That simple idea, began with a single person, has now transformed the lives of millions. That's the spirit of entrepreneurship.

So, yes, the new beginning we seek is not only possible, it has already begun. It exists within each of you, and millions around the world who believe, like we do, that the future belongs not to those who would divide us, but to those who come together; not to those who would destroy, but those who would build; not those trapped in the past, but those who, like us, believe with confidence and conviction in a future of justice and progress and the dignity of all human beings regardless of their race, regardless of their religion.

That's the enormous potential that we're hoping to unlock during this conference and hoping to continue not only this week but in the months and years ahead. So I'm grateful that all of you are participating. May God bless you all and may God's peace be upon you. Thank you very much. Thank you. (Applause.)

22 April 2010

Entrepreneurship Summit and AGOA Foster Networking

Opportunity to make connections can help Africa's economic growth

By Charles W. Corey
Staff Writer

Washington — Both the Presidential Summit on Entrepreneurship April 26–27 and the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA) Forum in August aim to offer business participants and entrepreneurs an opportunity to network productively.

U.S. Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs William Fitzgerald previewed both events for reporters in Nairobi and Yaounde via digital videoconference April 22.

The summit fulfills President Obama's pledge, in his Cairo speech in June 2009, to hold such a conference. And the summit will provide a forum where entrepreneurs can exchange ideas on building their businesses, Fitzgerald said.

"Help people develop networks" so they can ultimately begin to work together, that's the goal, he said.

The AGOA Forum will be held both in Washington and Kansas City, Missouri, to focus on agribusiness. The annual forum is held alternately in the United States and Africa, with last year's conference in Nairobi. This is the first time an AGOA Forum will be hosted in two U.S. cities.

"This is yet another way we hope to help Africa's economic growth," Fitzgerald said. "We have all suffered in the recent global crisis. Some would argue, and I would probably agree, that Africa suffered more, so what we need to do is for all of us to get back on our feet. The best way to do that is to let the private sector do it. Have the business people talking to the business people and let's go from there."

Recalling President Obama's remarks in Cairo about the summit, Fitzgerald explained that "the idea of the entrepreneurship summit is to bring together entrepreneurs, foundations — almost like a matchmaking service in a way ... to get ... entrepreneurs together with fellow entrepreneurs in the United States" to network and find ways to expand their businesses.

The summit will host 250 delegates from some 60 different countries. Twenty-three African entrepreneurs — including 11 women — will attend from 10 African countries.

In the United States, venture capital firms actively seek businesses in which to invest. In other parts of the world it can be hard to find funding and investment capital, Fitzgerald said. This summit will provide an opportunity for entrepreneurs to share ideas about finding funding, starting a business, soliciting potential investors and dealing with government regulations.

Both the White House summit and the AGOA Forum will include youth and women entrepreneurs. In addition to the women entrepreneurs at the summit, there will be 25 women entrepreneurs at the AGOA Forum in August.

Confirmed participants for the White House Entrepreneurship Summit are coming from Afghanistan, Albania, Algeria, Australia, Austria, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Brazil, Brunei, Cameroon, Canada, China, Denmark, Djibouti, Egypt, Finland, France, The Gambia, Germany, India, Indonesia, Iraq, Israel, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Kosovo, Kuwait, Kyrgyzstan, Lebanon, Libya, Madagascar, Malaysia, Mauritania, Morocco, Netherlands, Niger, Nigeria, Norway, Oman, Pakistan, the Palestinian Territories, Paraguay, the Philippines, Qatar, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Syria, Tajikistan, Tunisia, Turkey, the United Arab Emirates, Uganda, the United Kingdom, the United States and Yemen.

19 April 2010

African Banker Previews White House Entrepreneurship Summit

Says event will create a bridge of understanding and prosperity

This article is part of series on delegates to the April 26–27 Presidential Summit on Entrepreneurship.

By Charles W. Corey
Staff Writer

Washington — The April 26–27 [Presidential Summit on Entrepreneurship](#) will offer entrepreneurs from around the world the chance to learn from each other, work together and create a bridge of understanding that will help build a new level of prosperity worldwide, according to a banker from Cameroon who will travel to Washington to participate in the summit.

Alamine Ousmane Mey, chief executive officer of Afriland First Bank of Cameroon — his nation's third-largest — made that point in an interview with *America.gov* before leaving to attend the Washington event. Mey is one of three entrepreneurs who will represent Cameroon.

Pointing out that the summit is a direct outgrowth of President Obama's [June 4, 2009, Cairo speech to the Muslim world](#), Mey said that speech called for a new way of doing things, a new beginning and changes in the ways people think — particularly in education and communication. Mey stressed the importance of people working together to promote trade rather than just relying on aid, all in promotion of one goal: "to build a new world based on peace, security and prosperity."

"As a banker and entrepreneur in Africa, and in Cameroon in particular, I look forward to the opportunity to attend the summit, interact with people from America and other countries. It is an opportunity to learn from each other ... to be an ambassador or social entrepreneur to address all of the problems President Obama mentioned in his Cairo speech," he said.

"The summit," Mey said, "is just the beginning of the whole process" of getting to a higher level of understanding and achieving greater prosperity worldwide through partnership.

Focusing on entrepreneurship, job creation and community development, the summit will bring together approximately 200 successful entrepreneurs

from more than 50 countries. Its goals are to identify ways to advance economic and social entrepreneurship, build networks among stakeholders in entrepreneurship, and provide an opportunity to establish partnerships that advance entrepreneurship.

Mey said people are now taking a new look at entrepreneurs. "Despite the problems we face, entrepreneurs play an important and vital role in an economy. The tensions we are experiencing in wars sometimes have their roots in misery and poverty. ... If people are able to live in peace and security and they have the possibility to work and enjoy a bright future, then we will have fewer problems in the world and more stability.

"Entrepreneurs take the risk to transform an idea into a project to develop and generate new, innovative products to serve the community ... and this role is important," he said. "Improving our living conditions can only be done by creating wealth — wealth created in a sustainable manner, bearing in mind our social and environmental responsibility. The proper place to do that is in the private sector by promoting enterprises and entrepreneurship, with the support from government acting as facilitator and regulator, as well as the civil society, he explained.

Entrepreneurship generates wealth, Mey said. "If you look at statistics, you will see that job creators, wealth creators, [gross domestic product] developers are entrepreneurs. So we have to devote more attention to this community of players" that contributes to improving living conditions.

Mey said he is looking forward to learning from others at the summit. He said he also hopes to help "create a bridge" among participants to achieve prosperity in a win-win joint venture approach.

"To take advantage of experience" from those in America and elsewhere to learn valuable wealth creation lessons and take those lessons back home is his goal, he said. "Doing this will help create a bridge of communication, a bridge of exchange. If we do so, we get to know each other much better. When we know each other much better, it is easier to dismiss our differences and work on what we share in common. This is where stability, peace and security can be built into our world today."

Mey said his bank is an indigenous operation created 20 years ago by local Cameroonians. The bank now has more than \$1.4 billion in total assets, with 500 employees. Most important, he said, Afriland First Bank emphasizes innovative banking services.

Those services, he said, include the Islamic Deposit Account, which facilitates the Muslim community's access to financial operations with Shariah-compliant solutions. Afriland First Bank also assists the Cameroonian National Hadj Commission and offers Muslims a savings plan to finance religious pilgrimages to Mecca, helps people in rural areas access banking services through their mobile phones and works to stimulate economic growth and development through microfinance lending. It is mobile phone technology, he said, that enables people in the rural areas to join the mainstream of the economy and play their vital role.

Mey said trade between entrepreneurs of different nations is preferable to aid and is the best way of achieving long-term economic growth and development based on human dignity.

"Today, with technology, we can take advantage of knowledge, know-how and experience from America and improve our living conditions, close the gap between the rich and poor and promote a broader, better life for everyone," he said.

President Obama will host the summit, and there will be moderated plenary sessions on key issues, including technology and innovation, access to capital, unleashing youth and women's entrepreneurship, mentoring and networking, fostering a culture of entrepreneurship, promoting and enabling business, and social entrepreneurship.

Entrepreneurs from around the world will be attending, along with a host of American entrepreneurs, business executives and top U.S. government officials.

Confirmed participants are coming from Afghanistan, Albania, Algeria, Australia, Austria, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Brazil, Brunei, Cameroon, Canada, China, Denmark, Djibouti, Egypt, Finland, France, The Gambia, Germany, India, Indonesia, Iraq, Israel, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Kosovo, Kuwait, Kyrgyzstan, Lebanon, Libya, Madagascar, Malaysia, Mauritania, Morocco, Netherlands, Niger, Nigeria, Norway, Oman, Pakistan, the Palestinian Territories, Paraguay, the Philippines, Qatar, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Syria, Tajikistan, Tunisia, Turkey, the United Arab Emirates, Uganda, the United Kingdom, the United States and Yemen.

23 April 2010

A New Beginning: Presidential Summit on Entrepreneurship, Day 2

Join us for webcasts and webchats April 27 from Washington

President Obama, with the Department of State and the Department of Commerce, will host A New Beginning: The Presidential Summit on Entrepreneurship April 26–27 in Washington. Delegates from more than 40 countries on five continents have been invited to participate. The summit will highlight the role entrepreneurship can play in addressing common challenges while building partnerships that will lead to greater opportunity abroad and at home.

CO.NX Web programs bring you the Presidential Summit on Entrepreneurship live. CO.NX programs will feature webcasts of the presentations as well as webchats with summit delegates and panelists. Please stay tuned for webcasts on April 27 starting at 9 a.m. EDT (13:00 GMT), 9:30 a.m. EDT (13:30 GMT), 11:15 a.m. EDT (15:15 GMT), 2:10 p.m. EDT (18:10 GMT) and 5 p.m. EDT (21:00 GMT). Also join us for live Q&A sessions with panelists at 7:30 a.m. EDT (11:30 GMT) and 4 p.m. EDT (20:00 GMT).

If you would like to participate in these webchats, please go to <https://statedept.connectsolutions.com/esummit>. No registration is needed. Simply choose "Enter as a Guest," type in your preferred screen name, and join the discussion. We accept your questions and comments before and at any time during the program.

15 April 2010

Presidential Summit on Entrepreneurship: A New Beginning

Fact sheet outlines U.S. foreign economic and development policy

U.S. Department of State
Bureau of Public Affairs
April 15, 2010

Fact Sheet

A New Beginning: Presidential Summit on Entrepreneurship

“It was innovation in Muslim communities that developed the order of algebra; our magnetic compass and tools of navigation; our mastery of pens and printing; our understanding of how disease spreads and how it can be healed.”

- President Barack Obama

Promoting economic and social entrepreneurship globally is a vital element of the Obama Administration’s foreign economic and development policy – a policy that fosters economic growth, creates jobs, promotes civil society and provides new economic opportunities for U.S. business and investors.

In his June 2009 speech in Cairo, President Obama pledged to host a Summit on Entrepreneurship to broaden and deepen ties between business leaders, foundations, and entrepreneurs in the United States and Muslim communities around the world. The Presidential Summit on Entrepreneurship, which will take place April 26-27 at the Ronald Reagan International Trade Center in Washington, D.C., will highlight the importance of entrepreneurship, job creation and community development.

The Summit emphasizes the President’s broader aims of supporting entrepreneurship, innovation, and economic opportunity at home and abroad. It is being hosted by the Department of State and the Department of Commerce.

Participants

Approximately 250 delegates from more than 50 countries on five continents will come together along with senior U.S. government officials and American business leaders at the Summit. Delegates were selected from nominations by U.S. Embassies and from online applicants. Selections were made based on the innovativeness of nominees’ ideas, their ability to promote entrepreneurship and their commitment to community service as well as on gender and geographic and urban/rural diversity.

Summit Goals

- Highlight successful entrepreneurs from Muslim communities
- Expand networks among stakeholders in entrepreneurship
- Find ways to replicate the most successful entrepreneurship efforts and approaches
- Identify ways to build and strengthen economic and social climates conducive to entrepreneurship
- Enable participants to announce or highlight their entrepreneurial programs

The Summit Agenda

The Summit will include moderated discussions on key issues and challenges for advancing entrepreneurship, including:

- Innovation and Technology
- Access to capital
- Catalyzing youth entrepreneurship
- Mentoring and giving back
- Fostering a culture of entrepreneurship
- Unleashing the power of women entrepreneurs
- Promoting entrepreneurship and enabling business
- Social entrepreneurship

Global Partnerships

In his Cairo speech, President Obama called for relationships between Americans and Muslims around the world based on mutual respect, mutual interest and partnership. The President initiated a U.S. government-wide effort to work with private sector and civil society partners to identify, train, connect, fund, sustain, and celebrate entrepreneurs in Muslim communities across the globe. In addition to partnerships and programs associated with the two-day Presidential Summit, partners are hosting related but independent events in Washington during the Summit week – and around the world in the months and years to come.

22 March 2010

A New Beginning: U.S. Summit on Entrepreneurship



Summit logo

By Phillip Kurata
Staff Writer

Washington — Entrepreneurs from more than 50 countries with sizable Muslim populations come to Washington in April on President Obama's invitation to celebrate the risky, exhilarating life of entrepreneurship and share ideas about sparking new businesses in their communities.

The April 26–27 conference — A New Beginning: The Presidential Summit on Entrepreneurship — builds on President Obama's [speech](#) to the Muslim world in Cairo June 4, 2009. He promised to host a summit on entrepreneurship "to identify how we can deepen ties between business leaders, foundations and social entrepreneurs in the United States and Muslim communities around the world."

"We now seek a broader engagement" that involves greater exchanges in education, health, science and shared ideals, he said in Cairo.

The conference will highlight the role that entrepreneurs play in communities in creating jobs and improving societies. Results expected from the gathering are new programs, partnerships, relationships and networks, which will encourage starting new businesses and social projects.

In all, about 250 people of various religious backgrounds are expected to participate in the meeting. They will come from Africa; the Middle East; South, Central and Southeast Asia; and Muslim communities in other regions and countries, including the United States.

Among the participants will be Muhammad Yunus, the father of microfinance — a strategy of making small loans to impoverished people to help them start businesses. For example, a woman might borrow \$50 to build a chicken coop, buy hens and sell their eggs. With profits, she would repay her loan

and qualify for a future loan, which she could use to expand her business. Yunus uses his [Grameen Bank](#) and Grameen Foundation, based in Dhaka, Bangladesh, to promote microfinance. He has received a Nobel Peace Prize for his work.

Leading the Pakistani contingent of entrepreneurs to the summit is a woman from Lahore, Pakistan, Roshaneh Zafar, whom Yunus mentored. With \$10,000 that his bank lent her, she launched the Kashf Foundation in 1996, which focuses on lending to poor women. Her microlending operations have grown from an initial 15 clients to more than 300,000 today. The Kashf Foundation has disbursed \$225 million to more than 1 million poor families, according to Zafar. It also has become the first nongovernmental microfinance institution to offer insurance. To expand the financial base, Zafar has established the Kashf Microfinance Bank, which can accumulate more capital than a foundation. She has received numerous international awards for her work in helping impoverished women raise living standards for themselves and their families.

"Helping poor women has a ripple effect throughout society," Zafar said. "When they make money, they spend it on health for their children and themselves and on children's education. The whole society benefits."

MORE THAN TALK

Walter Isaacson, president of the Aspen Institute, said it is vital that the summit be more than a public relations exercise. "We have to turn talk into action. The Obama administration has shaped a compelling vision of how an entrepreneurs' summit can transcend politics and get us working together around the world in a very exciting way," he said.

The institute has several projects designed to encourage Middle East entrepreneurship. It has played a key role in organizing the Middle East Venture Capital Fund, which is managed by Israeli businessman Yadin Kaufmann and Palestinian entrepreneur Saed Nashef. Backed by the European Investment Bank, Cisco Systems Inc., Intel Corporation and other contributors, the fund has \$50 million to fund high-growth, export-oriented ventures in information technology. It is the first venture capital fund targeting the Palestinian Territories.

"By having Israelis and Palestinians work together in funding new ventures, you get economic advantage as well as political advantage," Isaacson said.

Another project designed to put economic flesh on the administration's political outreach to the Muslim world is the institute's planned conference

on innovation and creativity in Abu Dhabi in June or July, according to Toni Verstandig, director of the Aspen Institute's Middle East programs.

She said that the conference will highlight the importance of having venture funds, research parks and universities adjacent to each other. This convergence is apparent at the most successful U.S. high-tech clusters, such as the Route 128 high-tech belt around Boston and Silicon Valley in California. "Innovation involves partnership among universities, businesses and government to foster creativity," she said.

Isaacson said some Gulf states, such as Qatar and the United Arab Emirates, are experiencing strong economic growth resulting from their investments in innovation and technology.

14 April 2010

Summit Delegate Will Discuss Importance of Business Education

April 19 webchat leading up to the Presidential Summit on Entrepreneurship

Ron Bruder, who will be a delegate to President Obama's summit on entrepreneurship April 26–27, will discuss the importance of business education for jobless youth in the Middle East and North Africa in a webchat April 19 at 8 a.m. EDT (12:00 GMT). He will explain how local partnerships provide the tools to create productive livelihoods.

Bruder is the founder and chief executive officer of the [Education for Employment Foundation](#) and chairman of The Brookhill Group, a real estate owner/management firm that he founded in 1977. He has owned and operated companies in the environmental remediation, pharmaceutical, oil and gas, and travel industries and has been a leading board member of several nonprofit organizations.

If you would like to participate in this webchat, please go to <https://statedept.connectsolutions.com/esummit>. No registration is needed. Simply choose "Enter as a Guest," type in your preferred screen name, and join the discussion. We accept your questions and comments before and at any time during the program.

02 April 2010

Moroccan-American Entrepreneur Cultivates Growing Niche Market

Allied Media connects clients to hard-to-reach audiences



Mostapha Saout, entrepreneur

By M. Scott Bortot

Staff Writer

Washington — Mostapha Saout wants to reach a small but growing audience.

Saout has built a business, [Allied Media Corporation](#), that develops and customizes marketing messages to ethnic groups in America. By targeting advertising to diverse ethnic communities, Allied Media reaches Americans who traditional media agencies have often ignored.

A Casablanca-born entrepreneur, Saout founded Allied Media in 1998 and started operations out of his home. At first, he struggled to find clients.

But after the attacks of September 11, 2001, clients recognized the need to communicate with ethnic communities, and Saout and his employees saw an opportunity.

"It dawned on everybody [in his office] that in addition to the danger of these extremists coming after the U.S., there was a big lack of understanding of that region and of the people in this country who are Muslims or Arabs," Saout said.

Soon, the U.S. government, corporations and nongovernmental organizations looked to Saout's media company to communicate with Arab

and Muslim populations in America and around the world. Allied Media's clients include the U.S. Army, Western Union, Aramex, the United Nations and Islamic Relief U.S.A.

For example, Allied Media is marketing the 2010 U.S. Census to [both Muslim and Arab-American communities](#). The Census Bureau now translates the census form into several languages, and Saout's company advertises in media outlets most used by ethnic communities.

A full-service advertising company, Allied Media is based in Alexandria, Virginia. Saout's 40 employees provide clients a range of services including market research, public relations strategies and video production for television and the Internet.

What really sets Allied Media apart from the competition is its focus on ethnic markets. Saout said his diverse staff knows the intricacies of ethnic markets, both foreign and domestic, as well as which media outlets are best at reaching certain groups.

"If you want mass-market outreach, then you would want to go with a much larger agency that deals in Main Street messaging," Saout said. But this approach often misses specific ethnic groups. "These messages cannot just be translated or broadcasted widely in the hopes that some of it will trickle down. It doesn't work that way."

"You also need somebody who also knows the sensitivities that will help the client not fall into a negative trap that will backfire and negate the message," Saout said. "You have to take a message and make sure that it resonates by taking into account cultural variables."

Despite having found his niche, Saout said challenges remain for his company. Half the challenge is finding new clients. Saout said Allied Media scours government Web sites to locate contracts and networks to find businesses opportunities.

Saout said it is a challenge to educate people about his company's advertising specialty. The Internet has been an indispensable tool to understand his market and promote Allied's services.

"A lot of people in companies, when they think of ethnic multimedia or minorities, they think only African American or Hispanic, end of story," Saout said. In addition to these two markets, Allied Media connects clients with Afghan, Arab, Eastern European, Iranian, Muslim, Somali and South Asian groups nationwide.

Saout said he thinks the growing realization that ethnic groups are important to reach, as well as the need to customize messaging to reach them, will help his business grow.

“There will be a need for companies like ours to navigate for clients to connect to whatever groups they want to speak with,” Saout said.

Being an immigrant is an advantage. Saout grew up in Morocco, attended the University of Paris X – Nanterre in France and holds a master’s degree in business administration with a focus on marketing from Seattle University in Washington state. During most of the 1990s, he worked for the television and radio organization Arab Network of America, where he learned about Arab and Muslim-American communities across the United States.

Because of his knowledge of Muslim and Arab-American communities, Saout is a featured commentator on major media outlets including CNN, CBS News, Fox News and National Public Radio. Saout often discusses Arab perceptions of America and how the United States can promote a positive image abroad.

28 October 2009

Pathways Envoys Inspire Entrepreneurs



A Honduran entrepreneur displays handcrafted jewelry.

[enlarge photo](#)



A Honduran entrepreneur displays handcrafted jewelry.

By Sharon Carper
Staff Writer

Washington — Forty Latin American women entrepreneurs of exceptional merit came together in Washington October 7–9 for a conference aimed at giving them the tools to expand on and deepen their success.

Beth Brooke, the global vice chairwoman of public policy, sustainability and stakeholder engagement for consulting firm Ernst & Young, told *America.gov* that “this conference was about tangible results, not just ‘for the moment’ experiences” and that the women who attended are living examples of “to whom much is given, much is expected.”

The conference was sponsored by the U.S. Department of State under the auspices of the Pathways to Prosperity in the Americas initiative, a principal goal of which is to ensure that the benefits of trade are shared evenly across the societies of the 11 nations of Latin America that have trade agreements with the United States.

Brooke and Nell Merlino, founder, president and chief executive officer of Count Me In for Women’s Economic Independence, a leading national nonprofit provider of resources for women, were chosen as Pathways Envoys by the State Department. The Pathways Envoys —

two from the U.S. and two from Latin America — met with aspiring entrepreneurs and their chosen mentors during the conference. Mentors are more experienced business women in the Americas who will follow the entrepreneurs for the next year to support growth and economic success. Also during the coming year, Brooke and Merlino will visit Pathways countries to encourage and advise women entrepreneurs and to promote women's entrepreneurship through media interviews and U. S. Embassy-sponsored programs.

Meeting attendees at the conference, Secretary of State Hilary Rodham Clinton applauded their efforts and ingenuity in their business endeavors. "Part of what we are trying to do here in the State Department with all of you is to make the case that empowering women is a key to progress and prosperity and peace. I've heard about some of the work that you are doing in your own lives, and I am very touched by the courage and commitment that so many of you have already shown," the secretary said.

Envoy Brooke brought to the conference wide experience in the economics of the developing world. Named by *Forbes* magazine as one of its 100 Most Powerful Women in the World, she has worked in developing countries to support women entrepreneurs as engines for poverty alleviation and economic growth.



An entrepreneur offers textiles from Peru.

[enlarge photo](#)



An entrepreneur offers textiles from Peru.

Said Brooke of her message to conference participants: "We want to blaze a pathway in the countries where these women are from. ... It's all about the power of how a community can move forward. The willingness of the entrepreneurs to convene in a cooperative setting, sharing technical expertise and knowledge, is very big."

As a Pathways Envoy, she looks forward to “encouraging those in the margins as well as those with leverage, and bringing both sides together is the hope of the envoys who attended the meetings at the conference.”

Envoy Merlino has vast experience in encouraging women to grow their small businesses into million-dollar enterprises. She encourages women to further the growth of their small businesses into successful enterprises.

“The energy and information that flowed was inspirational,” Merlino told *America.gov*. The message of the conference was “information, the opportunity to work with each other, to share information about how trade works. Your business does not operate in isolation.”

Merlino says women entrepreneurs need to dream big and achieve even more. She said the women at this conference learned “how to grow your business, how to help your family and country, and how to give to other people. How to do it all.”

Both the spirit of the conference and the actual message were the same, Merlino said: “Growing your own business means helping others too.”

She also emphasized to conference attendees the concept of the “missing middle.” Beyond the high-end capital and the small businesses, it is the middle of the business spectrum — businesses employing 200 or more people and filling containers for shipments — that empowers other women. “It’s important to focus on these businesses and the women who are the missing middle,” Merlino said. “Be really part of the Pathways to Prosperity initiative, helping to grow trade and business. Focus on women who are further along, the women who are employing others.”

During the closing ceremonies, in which Clinton greeted all the attendees, the secretary said: “I really believe that we need women’s voices to become more prominent in all of the debates throughout the world. We are not all the same with all the same dreams and experiences, but I do believe that we have a shared vision of what our world should be. And I am very committed to working through our hemisphere to create better understanding and closer cooperation.”

17 February 2005

United States Provides Skills Training to Middle East Women

Fact sheet outlines U.S. programs to support women in the region

Following is a fact sheet outlining U.S. government programs designed to provide political, legal and entrepreneurial training for women in the Middle East:

(begin fact sheet)

U.S. Department of State
Office of the Senior Coordinator for International Women's Issues
February 17, 2005

FACT SHEET

U.S. Commitment to Women in the Middle East

"Just as our own democratic paths have not always been smooth, we realize that democratic reform in the Middle East will be difficult and uneven. Freedom by its very nature must be homegrown. It must be chosen. It cannot be given and it certainly cannot be imposed." Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, February 8, 2005.

As part of the United States' strong commitment to advance freedom in the Arab world, President Bush, in December 2002, launched the Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI). MEPI recognizes women's issues as one of four key pillars integral to reform in the region along with political, educational, and economic advancements. Of the \$129 million that the United States has committed to MEPI, \$9 million has been dedicated to the Women's Pillar thus far. Women are also full beneficiaries of programs in the other three MEPI pillars. The projects listed below are representative of MEPI programs for women. More information is available in the Women's Pillar section of the MEPI Web site: <<http://mepi.state.gov/c10127.htm>>.

Political Participation and Civil Society

Regional Campaign Schools. The United States is helping to create campaign schools that will provide leadership and organizational training for women seeking elective office. The International Republican Institute and the National Democratic Institute, with MEPI support, conducted the first of these political skills training courses, for more than 50 women from Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, United Arab Emirates, and Yemen in Doha in February 2004. The Partners in Participation program, of which the Doha school was the first event, hosted a second event in Morocco in July, and will host a third school in the region in the coming months.

Arab Women's Forum. The Egyptian Center for Women's Rights (ECWR) organized the first annual Arab Women's Forum in Cairo in May 2003 to discuss how to overcome obstacles faced by Arab women. MEPI is providing follow-up funding to ECWR to conduct subsequent training and activities with women's non-governmental organizations (NGOs) from across the region.

Empowering Women's Organizations in Jordan and Egypt. Two NGOs -- the American Near East Refugee Aid and the General Union of Voluntary Societies of Jordan -- will work together to improve the capacity of small- to medium-sized women's community-based organizations to participate effectively in political dialogue and democratic reform. The Center for Development and Population Activity will conduct a similar program for grassroots women's organizations in four governorates in Egypt, working in partnership with the National Council of Women.

Tribal Areas Local Council Pilot Program in Yemen. NGOs are helping to develop democratically run local councils in tribal areas. The program also will help women to participate in Yemeni political life.

International Exchanges. Under the State Department's International Visitor (IV) Program, hundreds of women, including NGO leaders, journalists, teachers, and government officials have traveled to the United States to participate in international exchanges. Programs have addressed a wide range of issues, such as NGO management, the role of legislators, the judiciary, and the rule of law. Programs such as Women in Business and the Professions and The Role of Women in Social and Political Affairs are designed exclusively for women.

Survey of Women's Freedom. The Freedom House Rights Consortium, on behalf of the United States, is conducting a comprehensive survey of the status of women's freedom throughout the Middle East, to be published in December 2005. More information is available on the Freedom House Web site: [http:// www.freedomhouse.org/research/specreport.htm](http://www.freedomhouse.org/research/specreport.htm)
<<http://www.freedomhouse.org/research/specreport.htm>>.

Women and the Law

Arab Women and the Law Workshop. MEPI and the Government of Jordan hosted a workshop in Amman on women and law in February 2004. Nearly 90 women from 16 countries in the Middle East and North Africa region gathered to discuss key issues affecting women in the legal profession and to develop plans for future collaboration. At the end of the conference, MEPI announced it would support two follow-up activities: the establishment of a regional association for women in the legal profession and a public legal education campaign on women's rights and equality. These activities are part of a 2-year, \$6.5-million joint program on the Rule of Law and Women and the Law to be implemented by the American Bar Association. More information is available on the Arab Judicial Forum Web site: <<http://www.arabjudicialforum.org/>>.

Women's Legal Rights in Morocco. With MEPI support, NGOs are providing training to strengthen advocacy skills, develop institutional capacity, enhance legal literacy, and build outreach among organizations in different communities in Morocco, with a particular focus on the new family code, the Moudawana.

Economic Opportunities for Women

Business Internship Program for Young Middle Eastern Women. In early August 2004, 42 women from the Middle East arrived in the U.S. to begin the first business internship program. MEPI, in partnership with the Department's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA), has arranged for these young professionals to attend a month-long academic program at Duke University and Emory University and to have 3-month internships at Fortune 500 companies, law firms, and small- and medium-size companies. The program is designed to provide these young professionals the opportunity to acquire management and business skills and to learn more about the United States. For more information, please see the fact sheet, A U.S. Business Internship for Young Arab Women.

Middle East Entrepreneur Training (MEET). This program promotes entrepreneurship and small business development in the Middle East and North Africa. Women from the region comprised a third to nearly half of participants in a MEET-U.S. program focusing on business ownership, management skills building, capital and human resource development, and strategic planning held in December 2004 and January 2005. In June 2003, the program trained women entrepreneurs and small business owners. In September 2003, men and women in hospital administration participated. Future projects include a conference for women business leaders and the development of an alumnae network.

Educational and Women's Awareness Programs

Girls' Scholarships in Morocco. MEPI funding to Comité de Soutien à la Scolarisation des Filles (CSSF), or the Rural Girls' Educational Support Committee, is supporting 100 girls financially for 3 years to see them through middle school. CSSF and Moroccan NGOs will establish five new homes to ensure that the girls have safe and culturally acceptable living quarters near their school. This program is being extended to support another 100 girls in 2004.

Women's Functional Literacy. CARE Yemen will work with local communities to develop functional literacy programs designed to help women in agricultural production, savings and loan clubs, environmental management, maternal and child health (including HIV/AIDS awareness), political participation, and women's rights. Helen Keller International has provided literacy training to 20,000 women in the south of Morocco. MEPI also will support a \$2-million program to develop materials to raise awareness of the new family code in Morocco (Moudawana).

Showcasing Women Through the Media. MEPI will fund the production and distribution of videos showcasing how women across the region have overcome societal barriers and how their communities as a whole have benefited, as a way to encourage other young Arab girls and women to follow suit. Video interviews will be collected from throughout the Middle East and distributed initially in Jordan through the Jordan Education Initiative, as well as through regional TV stations.

Outreach to Saudi Women. The State Department has offered extensive teacher training for Saudi women over the past several years, and has conducted six IV programs with components on the topic of women as leaders in the public and private sectors. The U.S. Embassy in Riyadh

has also undertaken pro-active targeted outreach to women journalists and has developed a very close working relationship with two private women's colleges in Jeddah, one of which has also received MEPI support. In addition, 50% of the U.S. funded ACCESS English-language micro-scholarships (for relatively disadvantaged youth) are given to girls.

Partnerships With Other Programs

There are numerous joint programs through which the United States and MEPI partners support women throughout the Middle East. Some examples include:

Political Training. In Kuwait, the U.S.-Middle East Democracy Fund is sponsoring a program to train women activists to develop strategies for obtaining political rights for women, including the right to vote and run for elected office.

Media Training. Internews, an international NGO, provided 40 Jordanian, Palestinian, and Saudi journalists lessons in accuracy, objectivity, and balanced reporting. MEPI is also planning to work with Arab women news commentators and journalists to develop programs and productions to highlight women's issues and history.

Health Care. The Forty-Day Program provides postpartum care to mothers and infants in Tunisia, Jordan, and the West Bank. Safe Motherhood and Child Survival programs provide antenatal and postpartum care, safe delivery, and treatment of obstetric complications to women in Egypt, Yemen, Jordan, and Morocco.

Microcredit Programs. Since 1996, the United States has given more than 34,000 micro-credit loans worth more than \$13 million to Palestinian women entrepreneurs. These programs have helped thousands of women to build sustainable businesses.

22 June 2006

Middle East Free Trade Area Initiative

Promoting Development and Economic Reform in the Middle East

(begin text)

U.S. Department of State
Bureau of Public Affairs
June 21, 2006

MIDDLE EAST FREE TRADE AREA INITIATIVE

Promoting Development and Economic Reform in the Middle East

"Leaders in the region speak of a new Arab charter that champions internal reform, greater political participation, economic openness, and free trade."

- President George W. Bush

President George W. Bush announced the Middle East Free Trade Area (MEFTA) Initiative in May 2003 as part of a comprehensive effort to support the agenda in the Arab world for economic reform, job growth and development. Since the MEFTA initiative was launched, the United States has worked country-by-country with those who are interested in further economic integration, openness and prosperity.

A key element of the Initiative is to establish a Middle East Free Trade Area by 2013. That vision is beginning to take shape through U.S. free trade agreements with Israel, Jordan, Morocco, Bahrain and Oman, and Saudi Arabia's entry into the World Trade Organization.

MEFTA COMPONENTS

FREE TRADE AGREEMENTS

According to the UN's International Labor Office, the Middle East and North Africa have the highest rate of unemployment in the world -- 13.2%. FTAs encourage job creation, technology transfer, expanded manpower skills and training, and increased foreign direct investment in the Middle East. Businesses in the region receive preferential access to the United States -- the world's largest market.

FTAs generate export opportunities for U.S. goods and services, creating jobs for American workers and increasing consumer choice. They also provide legal protections for investors,

improvements in intellectual property protection, and greater transparency in government and commercial regulations.

TRADE AND INVESTMENT FRAMEWORK AGREEMENTS (TIFAs)

TIFAs provide an opportunity for regular discussion of commercial issues, economic reforms, and trade liberalization measures.

BILATERAL INVESTMENT TREATIES (BITs)

The U.S. Bilateral Investment Treaty program supports several key economic policy objectives that:

- Protect investment abroad in those countries where investors' rights are not already protected through existing agreements.
- Encourage the adoption of market-oriented domestic policies that treat private investment in an open, transparent, and non-discriminatory way.
- Support the development of international law standards.

Middle East BITs in force:

- Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Oman, Tunisia, Yemen

WTO ACCESSION

Countries applying for accession to the World Trade Organization join the rules-based system of global trade and are better able to take advantage of open markets.

ECONOMIC REFORM ASSISTANCE

The United States recognizes that many countries need assistance in their reform efforts, and provides funding and works with private sector partners and the Congress to help them achieve economic reform goals. Programs include:

- The Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI) has assisted countries to effect economic reforms and trade liberalization measures through technical assistance. MEPI supports entrepreneurship, especially among women and youth. It also links Arab and U.S. businesses, nongovernmental organizations, and governments to develop innovative policies and programs.
- The United States government works closely with the Middle East Free Trade Area Coalition comprised of leading U.S. companies, to support broader economic relations between the U.S. and Middle Eastern countries.

-- The Middle East Economic Caucus was created in February 2006 to increase bipartisan Congressional support for the MEFTA initiative.

FREE TRADE AGREEMENTS

U.S.-UAE - negotiations in process

U.S.-Oman - signed January 2006, awaiting ratification

U.S.-Bahrain - pending entry into force

U.S.-Morocco – 2006

U.S.-Jordan – 2001

U.S.-Israel - 1985

21 May 2008

Women Entrepreneurs Discuss Challenges and Successes in Business

Ask America webchat transcript, May 19

Two businesswomen discussed their challenges and successes in a May 19 Ask America webchat. Robin Chase is the co-founder and former CEO of Zipcar, a car-sharing service, and currently the CEO of GoLoco.org, an online social networking service that helps people create transportation networks. Ilham Zhiri, the founder of a successful printing company in Morocco, Impremerie el Maarif Al Jadida, participated in a U.S. State Department business development program called Middle East Entrepreneurship Training (MEET).

Following is the transcript:

(begin transcript)

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE
Bureau of International Information Programs
Ask America Webchat Transcript

Women Entrepreneurs: Challenges and Success in Business

Guest: Robin Chase & Ilham Zhiri
Date: May 19, 2008
Time: 2:30 p.m. EDT (1830 GMT)

Webchat Moderator: Welcome to our webchat! Today's discussion will begin at 14:30 EDT/18:30 GMT. You may begin submitting your questions now.

Because of our audio problems, we will send your questions to our two guests via this chat pod. But first, I would like to ask Ms. Chase and Ms. Zhiri to write a few brief words about themselves and their work.

Robin Chase: I founded Zipcar in 2000, was its CEO for 3 years and then on the board for an additional 2 years. Zipcar parks cars throughout dense metropolitan areas for members to reserve by the hour and by the day using either telephone or internet. People use Zipcar like they use their own cars. My current company is GoLoco, an online ride-sharing company. People post their trips (as passengers or drivers). They can show their trips to their friends, their co-workers, their neighbors, or anyone. We have included social networks so that you know something about the person you might share a ride with. We also help them share car travel costs online using [online payment system] Paypal.

Ilham Zhiri: Thank you for inviting me on this webchat. I am a business woman and entrepreneur, running a family business in printing and publishing. I am a Board Member of AFEM – Association of Women Entrepreneurs in Morocco. I am also a founding member of the Casa Pionnier incubator project – a project to support start up women's businesses in services and promotes young women's entrepreneurship. I have participated in many MEPI - Middle East Partnership Initiative programs – sponsored by the U.S. State Department in the Middle East as well as in the U.S. I participated lately in the program of the Women Business Leaders Summit in the USA.

Comment [RABENJINJA Bodo Printing company manager, Madagascar]: In some part of Madagascar, especially in the provinces, it is part of the cultural background of people that man is superior to woman, thus very few women rise up to higher position or become entrepreneurs to change that culture, we all know that when women take responsibilities that will help fight poverty and better any society's standard of living.

A [Robin Chase]: Women are known in all cultures as organizers of families. They frequently have to juggle young children, older parents, shopping, households, manage the family business. Our skills at multi-tasking and organization make us great entrepreneurs.

A [Ilham Zhiri]: Yes , absolutely in my culture as well, but now it is changing , we have now 7 women ministers in Morocco and 33 women Members of Parliament a well.

Q [Lucile RANDRIA President Femmes Entrepreneurs de Madagascar FEM in Fianarantsoa, Madagascar]: Would the chatters share their experience in the time management for:

1. The accomplishment of a woman functions to assume every day, every week every month and throughout, the year around, according to United Nations Population Fund (FNUAP, in French) demography Expert.

2. Namely, caring for the networking and their own business enterprise.

A [Robin Chase]: Having enough time is always a problem! I believe anyone can become efficient and women tend to this skill naturally. I personally found that when I had young children and was working part-time, I was much more efficient than my fellow co-workers. I had no time for chatting, no time for a cup of coffee, or talking about what happened over the weekend. For me, when I am at work, I am very focused on work, when at home, focused on home.

And we do need to ask for and get help -- everyone. No one does all the work themselves. We need to understand what work only we alone can do, and ask help from others in the other jobs when/where appropriate.

A [Ilham Zhiri]: Yes concerning the 1st question, time management is the whole issue, I am very focused person and do my best to manage free time and working time. In my opinion, delegation and team work are the key issues

Webchat Moderator: If you are just joining us, welcome! We are conducting this chat through the text-chat pod.

Q [RAZANAMIALISOA Vololony Chief of Service Ministry of Public Works, Madagascar]: What are the keys of success in business for Women?

A [Robin Chase]: I would like to think that most of the keys of success for women are the same as those for men. Listening to your customers; always seeking to improve your business; treating your employees and customers well and with respect; watching money very closely; being persistent and focused.

A [Ilham Zhiri]: There is no magical answer, it is the same as men, the keys to success are based on hard work, hard work, hard work, integrity, honesty, and using emotional intelligence to solve issues and go beyond hurdles.

Q [RAZANAMIALISOA Vololony Chief of Service Ministry of Public Works, Madagascar]: In entrepreneurship, do you think there is equality between men and women?

A [Ilham Zhiri]: Not quite in my country Morocco, it is beginning to change but still to come. We AFEM - Association of Women Entrepreneurs - are pleading for a gender approach implementation government plan. Up to now, we have 3 ministers have signed on, still more to come. However, when applying for jobs, there is no segregation, the job will be qualified only by skills and competencies.

A [Robin Chase]: In my country, I would have to say that in the business world there is still not parity between the sexes. Particularly in entrepreneurship. Only 3% of the money invested by venture capitalists in the U.S. country go to women start ups.

Q [Chat Participant]: What advices you have both for young woman entrepreneur?

A [Ilham Zhiri]: Believe in yourself, in your dream, in your project, in your business. Hard working, get coach, having mentors has helped as well. [To this day] when I have a problem I ask around, through my network, and seek the best advice and solution for this problem.

A [Robin Chase]: Be persistent. Keep trying. Talk and connect to everyone you know. I tell entrepreneurs that everyone you talk to is really your free unpaid consultant. What did they understand and not understand about your idea or project? If they didn't understand, tell yourself it is your fault for not explaining it well. If they asked questions you don't know the answers to, find out the answers!

Do have a plan for how your idea will work well when it is small, pay attention to money! Really understand the costs of your business.

Q [Zo a student]: According to [Fredrick Winslow] Taylors' division of work, one could go up to the hierarchy level in the work place, as for women it is not easy to occupy the top position of management. How do you find that?

A [Robin Chase]: Being the CEO of a company is both wonderful and hard. I compare it to conducting an orchestra. You get to see your ideas come to life through the efforts of a group of skilled and talented people. It is also very hard and lonely, with some very difficult decisions to be made at times.

On balance, the good outweighs the bad.

A [Ilham Zhiri]: Yes, it is not easy to occupy top positions, we - women struggle everyday. Recently we had in Morocco, a reform of the Family law, that is in favor of women [providing] equal rights to divorce and etc. so women now are having more rights to occupy better and higher positions, As I said before, today we have 7 women ministers, and 2 out of 33 female Members of Parliament in my country are both CEOs [of firms] and past and actual president of our association AFEM.

Webchat Moderator: AFEM is the Association of Women Entrepreneurs in Morocco

Q [Webchat Moderator]: Was there a point in your life that someone or some event made a difference that gave you the inspiration to become a business person? If so, who was that person or what was that event?

A [Robin Chase]: Many things. The first time I sat down with a real businessman (an Egyptian), I was impressed by his care for his employees, and that he was trying to make the world a better place by providing employment and income, in addition to his service. I had never thought that businessmen cared about that. My mother also inspired me. She started up many small businesses doing things she loved, and she too created employment for people and income for herself. She was an artist.

A [Ilham Zhiri]: I can't not think of better examples than my father. He is a great entrepreneur for the last 44 years. He is the one who is inspiring me and is my IDOL. Believe it or not, He is the one that encourages and pushed me to do my studies abroad when I was only 17 and half years old. He is very humble, quite successful and great inspiration for me up to this day.

Q [Raharinjanahary Berthine English teacher Madagascar]: How about education, do we need to be highly educated in order to become a good manager?

A [Robin Chase]: Not necessarily. You need to be good with people to be a good manager of people. I am often very impressed with the knowledge and understanding people have of processes and operations close to them. I look for help and insight to a problem from those closest to it -- and those people may not have a formal education. But they certainly have a good education in what the problem/issue/service at hand is.

That said, education is very important and opens up many more opportunities for people, so it is critical. For my own children, my desire is that they know how to learn quickly because they will be having many different careers and jobs throughout their lives.

A [Ilham Zhiri]: Well, I think we need to have a basic education, good skills, hands-on experience, a very common sense to manage your employees. A university degree would be appreciated.

Q [RAZANAMIALISOA Vololony Chief of Service Ministry of Public Works, Madagascar]: Can you explain your experiences in transportation management in your country? (In Madagascar there is a little percent of women transportation manager);

A [Robin Chase]: In [the U.S.] there are few women in transportation as well. I guess my interest in Zipcar stemmed from my being a mother with three children and not having access to a car, since my husband used it to go to work every day. I was left at home with the children and no car ever. In fact, I did not want a car very much, but I did want one sometimes, and I didn't want to have to maintain it or pay for the whole car myself. This first-hand experience, together with my business background and understanding that internet access and wireless data transmission could make the whole idea of renting a car for an hour possible.

A [Ilham Zhiri]: Well in my country, there is quite few taxi drivers women; but we do have few women entrepreneurs in transportation, as matter of fact, one of our members of AFEM holds a trucking company.

Comment [Faharoudine Soavelo Research Consultancy, Madagascar]: I feel that man in general don't accept the idea that a woman is the head of a company. Thus, they want to pay women less or they just don't want to pay because I am woman. In spite of that, clients have faith in woman rather than in man as far as money are concerned.

A [Ilham Zhiri]: Yes, that is true, worldwide, women are paid less than men for the same job. Yet, we are struggling and pleading through institutions such as ANME - Agency for Small and Medium Enterprises - for that, along with Ministry of Labor.

A [Robin Chase]: Regarding the skill and value of women versus men: I believe the proof is in what we produce. If I am good at my job (and I have the confidence to ask for it), my employee will be more than happy to pay me what I am worth, since I'm doing a good job. The same should be true at the executive level. But I do have to admit, that even here in the US, some men think that women executives don't have the skill -- even though the reality is right in front of their eyes! So I ask everyone, men and women, to please look at the facts and not their prejudices when making decisions about a woman's ability to do a job, run a company, or have a good idea.

Comment [Lucile RANDRIA President Femmes Entrepreneurs de Madagascar FEM in Fianarantsoa, Madagascar]: As Ecotourism and ethno tourism are promoted widely today, it would be interesting to hear or read both Entrepreneur ladies advice, recommendations about starting a women entrepreneurs networking organization, starting of a national level; and expanding internationally later on.

A [Robin Chase]: This is a good idea, but I know from experience that networks are hard to start. So, two pieces of advice -- look to see if there is something like this already. I feel like there are some women in business networks out there, although I don't remember their names off the top

of my head. But you should be able to start and enjoy the benefits of a local network. Start small and expand it out. I used to belong to a CEO startup breakfast group -- 8 of us met at 7:30am at a cafe once a month. This was a very valuable way to share ideas, networks, and problems -- there are so few people you can share your problems with. If this idea proves successful, expand it outward to others nearby.

I do think there are other groups out there trying this idea -- I met a Turkish women's group a few years ago. I just found one called witi.com women in technology, an international organization.

A [Ilham Zhiri]: Good idea, AFEM is already member of FCEM – International Organization of all Women Business Associations. As matter of fact, in 2004, Morocco, Marrakesh in Particular, through our association and the government, we hosted the Women's Global summit, it was success. In 2005, we hosted the election of the Worldwide President election in Fez – Morocco.

So I do believe in Networking and International [networks] one since today we are in global world. One of the best examples that I can think of is though our incubator project to assist and help start up women in the services sector, we had international support from Spain, and from UNIFEM, UNDP and well as from [The U.S. State Department Middle East Partnership Initiative MEPI] - an American program.

Webchat Moderator: We wish to thank Ms. Zhiri and Ms. Chase for joining us today!

Robin Chase: It was my pleasure! Success to us all.

Ilham Zhiri: Thank you Robin, I would love to keep in touch.

Webchat Moderator: We wish to thank Ilham Zhiri and Robin Chase for joining us today. A transcript of today's webchat will be published to our Ask America homepage within one business day.

Useful links

- [White House](#)
- [Blogs at America.gov](#)
- [Information about Global Entrepreneurship Week](#)
- [Principle of Entrepreneurship](#)
- [Entrepreneurship and Small Business](#)
- [Summit Information](#)
- [america.gov](#)
- Video: [Video - America.gov](#)